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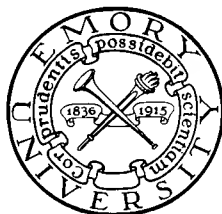
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## CHAPTER I.

### A TEACHER OF LANGUAGES.

WHEN, after the fall of the elder branch of the House of Bourbon, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty, the Faubourg St. Germain was nearly emptied of its noble inhabitants, when runaways of all descriptions, fearing a new reign of terror, made England once more their place of refuge, there landed at Portsea a storm-tossed fugitive, named Pascal Perrotin.

He had furtively embarked, in the dead of night, on board a small fishing-lugger, called the *Jeune Adèle*, of Saint-Mâlo; and, after three days' experience of rough Channel weather, such was his state of mind, that whether he set foot on the shore he fled from or on that for which the vessel was bound, had become to him a matter of supreme indifference: to find himself on *terra firma* again was all he asked.

At last—it seemed a lifetime to Monsieur Perrotin—his prayer was granted, and he stood on the well-known landing-place of Common Hard, safe from his enemies, who, it may be observed, had never troubled their heads about him. But fear makes men gregarious and imitative of others' flight; and when Pascal Perrotin heard that The First Christian Baron had taken wing, he thought it high time to follow the illustrious example. With perfect safety to themselves and without any danger to their country, both might have remained—the one at his hotel in the Rue de Grenelle, the other in his lodging on the Quai Voltaire;



but it seemed an important thing to emigrate—and so they emigrated.

In taking this step there was one point of view in which Monsieur Perrotin appeared to ~~have~~ the advantage over his co-mate in exile: the State might seize upon the property of The First Christian Baron, but it was out of its power to confiscate the goods of Pascal Perrotin—for the simple reason that, when he quitted Paris, he left nothing which could, by possibility, be confiscated, except the State had been his washerwoman. This was a negative advantage, however, for by the time he had paid his passage to Portsea, and ascertained, to his sorrow, that even an emigrant does not cross the Channel *gratis*, he discovered that all the money he was master of amounted to rather more than a hundred *francs*; but as the superabundance was only in *sous*, his fortune may very fairly be estimated in the round numbers already given.

Now a hundred *francs*, managed with French economy—the straitest of all financial processes—will go a long way in Paris (at least, it would have done so before the era of Imperial luxury); but a hundred *francs* in England is not a sum to fall back upon in every emergency, particularly when you start with the rate of exchange against you. The latter fact Monsieur Perrotin speedily discovered on entering the shop of Mr. Levi Abrahams, where an intimation, conveyed in his own language, that the utmost value was given for all description of foreign coin, attracted him like a welcome. He was, indeed, welcome enough to Mr. Levi Abrahams as long as the latter thought there was a chance of making the stranger lay out on “a shplendid di'mond pin” the three pounds five, which was the conscientious equivalent for a hundred *francs*; but when the Israelite merchant found that Pascal Perrotin had no fancy for trinkets, his welcome and his greasy smile disappeared together: he did not even know where the Frenchman could find a lodging—that was not his line of business; and having “cushtomers” waiting—two jolly tars who looked like prizes—he wished him good morning.

Alone, then, in the streets of Portsmouth, Monsieur Perrotin was left to shift for himself, with his three pounds five in his pocket, and a very small bundle in his hand.

While he was wandering about, observing everybody with an eye of distrust—the result of his interview with Mr. Levi Abrahams—a few descriptive words, to say who and what he was, may not be out of place.

Pascal Perrotin's father was an honest vinedresser in the department of the Loire, and owned a small parcel of wine-producing ground on the banks of that noble, but revolutionary, river. Living beyond the reach of its ordinary floods, and favoured by good harvests—his own industry aiding—old Michel Perrotin had husbanded, out of his small gains, sufficient to send his son to be educated at Tours. Pascal took to his studies kindly, did not disgrace his clerical instructors; and when he left college, was fully qualified to instruct others. Education was his *métier*. He followed it, in the first instance, in the *château* of Monsieur Saint Aubin, a wealthy proprietor, near Blois; but after a few years, his pupils having in the meantime grown up, he departed from Touraine to seek his fortune in Paris. Impressed with the belief—and justly impressed—that to impart the pronunciation of Blois is to confer the same benefit on a Parisian which a Scotchman *fancies* he bestows on a Londoner when he favours him with *his* dialect, Pascal Perrotin thought he had little more to do, in making the fortune he sought, than merely to announce his arrival in the capital.

But whether he did not advertise sufficiently, or whether the self-satisfied Parisians preferred their own clipt phrases to his full-weighted flow of language, certain it is that he did not grow richer; it may, on the contrary, be affirmed, that at the end of five or six years he was considerably poorer, and if it had not been for the modest income he derived from his *succession* in the Blésois—old Michel Perrotin being dead—it might have gone hard with him to find the means of living. It is true, he got a stray pupil now and then among the English who lived in Paris; but in the spring of eighteen hundred and thirty the Loire forgot its propriety altogether, despised the limits of the Levée, broke through that famous dyke wherever it opposed resistance, and inundated the country far and wide, sweeping away everything before it. Thousands were ruined by the inundation, including Pascal Perrotin; his smiling vineyard became

in one night an unsightly heap of stones and gravel; he had no capital wherewith to restore his desolated property, and remained that very pitiable object,—a proprietor without a landmark. Within three months of this distressing event, the *ordonnances* of July were issued—the revolution followed next day, away went king and court, away went The First Christian Baron, and—what was more to the purpose, and served in some degree to justify the flight of Pascal Perrotin—away went all the English families.

What was he to do? Loyalty and honour counselled him to tread in the steps of his king, contempt of the Parisian "*tuteurs*"—that was his word—pointed the same way, and, self-interest, with a glimpse of hope in the distance, beckoned from the cliffs of perfidious Albion.

So, to perfidious Albion he made up his mind to go. He disguised himself, in a city where nobody knew him, secretly took a place in the diligence to Saint-Mâlo, travelling in the obscure depths of the *banquette*, and after confiding himself to the sea—a sacrifice which none but a Frenchman can rightly understand—arrived *incognito* in England.

The Portsmouth people are in the constant habit of seeing strangers from all countries in their streets, and few, as he passed along, took any notice of Monsieur Perrotin. Nor was there, in his personal appearance, very much to notice, unless it were the extreme fragility of his figure, his very meagre features, and an excessively prominent, bony nose, which he seemed, literally, to be always following. For the rest, he was a man prematurely old, who might have been taken for sixty, when he wanted at least twenty years of that age. But there are a great many who, like the Wechselkinder of the German tradition, have never looked young, and Monsieur Perrotin was *facile princeps* of this race.

From the Common Hard of Portsea he found his way past various gates and bridges into the High Street of Portsmouth, anxiously searching for a not too expensive hotel where he might quiet the wolf that now gnawed within him. But to look for an inexpensive hotel in that locality was a fruitless endeavour; and on he went till he reached the Sally Port, and entered the Alsatian region of the Point, finally bringing up at the "Blue Posts," which well-known

house, since Peter Simple has been there, requires no description.

However uninviting to anybody but midshipmen, the Blue Posts appeared to Monsieur Perrotin exactly the kind of place to suit him, and he entered.

Being a Teacher of Languages, *en gros*, he had no fear of not being understood, though certainly English was not his *forte*, all he knew of it having been picked up here and there in Paris, amongst his English pupils: the value, moreover, of what he remembered was considerably modified by his pronunciation. As a recompense for these drawbacks, he possessed a very powerful voice, and, as Bob Fudge says of old Laïs, generally "chose to make use of it." It may, indeed, be laid down, almost as a general rule, that whatever other qualifications a Frenchman may have to recommend him to the world, the capacity for making a noise is very rarely denied him.

"I say," he roared to the waiter, who, accustomed to bundles, stepped forward to relieve Monsieur Perrotin of his, "I will somm dinnerre."

"Very well, musseer," said the waiter, at once detecting Monsieur Perrotin's country,—though, for that matter, he said "Musseer" to every foreigner; "what would you like to have?"

And he gabbled through the larder of the Blue Posts.

"Sheep!" exclaimed Monsieur Perrotin, with emphasis. "First of all—sheep."

The waiter, being a true-born Briton, laughed, of course, at the Frenchman's mistake before he corrected it.

"Mutton, musseer! That's it!" said he, nodding. "There's a nice 'arnch in prime cut; three of the *Powerful's* young gentlemen is all as it 'as been to."

Monsieur Perrotin accepted the waiter's nod as an answer to his exclamation: of his speech he could only make out that mutton was the theme, but he was not likely to be at a loss on this point, his informant having pointed, as he spoke, to a table where three saucy, handsome boys were paying their addresses to the joint in question. The ravages they had already made in it showed plainly that their appetites deserved the name of the ship they belonged to.

A hungry Frenchman, however, who had been three days at sea without eating, was not likely to object to anything in the shape of food; and, bestowing a gratified smile on everybody in the coffee-room, Monsieur Perrotin sat down in a corner and prepared for his meal.

If the three young gentlemen of the *Powerful* had not been under the necessity of fulfilling the engagement which had brought them on shore—that, namely, of riding off to Portsdown fair the moment dinner was over—it is very probable they might have had some fun at the expense of Monsieur Perrotin; but, their time being short, they limited themselves to a few remarks on his personal appearance, while they hastily swallowed the scalding hot gin-and-water with which they wound up their repast.

“Johnny Crappō!” said one, by way of designating Monsieur Perrotin’s nation.

“What a twist he has!” observed the second, forgetful of his own exploits.

“Never ate meat before, I’ll swear,” said the third. “Nipcheese wouldn’t like to mess that fellow!”

And Monsieur Perrotin, raising his eyes and perceiving that the three young gentlemen were looking at him while they talked, gave them another grateful smile, and resumed his agreeable occupation.

The *Powerfuls* burst out into a loud laugh, lit their cigars, shouted out “Good-by, old boy, don’t swallow the bone!” rushed out of the room, mounted their steeds which were waiting at the door, and galloped away at the usual midshipman’s pace, one of the three a little behind the other two, having stopped to buy an orange, which he threw at Monsieur Perrotin’s head as he sat with his back to the open window. The young gentleman was a good marksman—he could already lay a gun well, and hoped some day to do so in the teeth of an enemy’s battery—and the missile caught Monsieur Perrotin in the nape of the neck, causing him to drop a glass of porter which he was at that moment raising to his lips, and eliciting from him a tremendous expletive, which need not be repeated. But beyond the broken tumbler and this momentary explosion of astonishment and wrath, no damage was done, and Monsieur Perrotin finished his dinner in peace.

Being now on more equal terms with the world, he began to consider what course he ought to take.

To remain at Portsmouth, where he knew nobody, was not likely to serve his purpose. He had left France, partly from fear, partly in the hope of gaining a livelihood by teaching French and Italian. There was written down in his pocket-book the name and address of an English lady to whose two daughters—*des êtres charmant*!—he had given lessons at their apartment in the Place de la Concorde. The lady had a magnificent house in London, and, if he hoped to prosper, thither Monsieur Perrotin must go.

He took out his pocket-book, and turned over the leaves till he found what he sought. He had copied the address from that hastily written by one of his pupils. English ladies write very good hands—no one denies them that accomplishment—but, if a fault may be hinted, it is that every letter so much resembles some other, that the reader, if at all desirous of making out the meaning, must, nine times out of ten, be guided by the context. But besides the general vandyked illegibility, Monsieur Perrotin's difficulty of transcription was increased, in the present instance, by an after-thought on the part of the fair writer, and an emendation of his own, arising from his profound knowledge of English ceremonials, so that his copy represented a somewhat doubtful topography. As he looked at it now, it read as follows :—

“ MISTRISS SCROPE ESQ.

NO. 64 GRINRAM KIPPER SHUT

LONDON.”

Monsieur Perrotin, however, felt perfectly satisfied with the address. It was a talisman, he doubted not, which would carry him safely to his journey's end; and after repeating it three or four times to fix it in his memory in case he should have the misfortune to lose his pocket-book, he resolved to announce his arrival by letter, and told the waiter to bring him “pepper.”

The usual *imbroglio* followed, but at last he obtained what he wanted, and composed the following epistle, which, in honour of his patroness, he wrote in his best English :—



"MADAME,—Having passed the Sleeve by a detestable weather which has failed to loose me, I am descended to-day upon the coasts of the old England, and at the moment I write I am making my box to go to London see you, remembering of your amiable kindness to give me a former invitation. Unhappily for France we have for us at last the revolution come back, but not yet the real conditions of it are known. For that I have not waited thinking only of my salvation which I accomplished in the diligence of Saint-Mâlo. From there I come to Portsmouth, a very sad city, in which to live would be impossible. Therefore I hope to arrive at London to teach my tong to the scholars who shall desire to learn her. But the first thing, Madame, I make haste to throw myself at your feet and squeeze your hand.

"Agree, Madame, the respectuous homages of your obeying server,

"PASCAL PERROTIN.

"One thousand remembers of my part to the young Misses."

This letter, superscribed as above, he sent to the post-office by a porter who was sufficiently skilled in polite literature to be able to grin at the direction, and sufficiently kind-hearted to wish that he or she, whoever it was meant for, "might get it,"—a phrase in great vogue just then, which, popularly understood, detracted rather from the porter's claim to benevolence of disposition.

It was not Monsieur Perrotin's intention to wait for Mrs. Scrope's answer, his object in writing being merely to herald his own approach. He had found out, by dint of much hammering at the Ganymede of the Blue Posts, that there was a night-coach for London, and he forthwith secured a place outside. With the amount of the fare and his bill at the inn, Monsieur Perrotin's three-pounds-five were reduced by at least one-half. He stormed a good deal at the price of his dinner and the charge for a broken glass, and then it was the waiter discovered the meaning which Monsieur Perrotin attached to the word "sheep."

"You should have spoke out like a man," he said, "and not have chattered in gibberish as no one can't understand, if you wanted me to know you meant to dine here cheap.

Roast mutton's a precious sight too good for anybody as is mean enough for to go and offer a waiter three-half-pence, and them French ones, not worth nothing, most likely. Keep 'em yourself, you'll want 'em afore you've done."

This growling farewell accompanied Monsieur Perrotin all the way to the door of the Blue Posts, from whence the "Telegraph" set out for London. He climbed up to a seat behind the coachman, where he was conspicuous enough to be recognized on the road by the three young gentlemen of the *Powerful*, as they galloped back from Portsdown fair. Luckily for him, they had no oranges in their pockets, but they favoured him, as they rode by, with a shower of nuts and the vociferous salutation of "Bon soir, Johnny Crappō." Monsieur Perrotin did not smile on this occasion, for he could not resist the conclusion that the greeting thus bestowed was not intended for a compliment. But he was something of a philosopher, and being also very tired, he soon afterwards fell asleep,—dipping and diving, and very nearly falling off the coach at least twenty times in the course of the night. He, however, weathered that danger, partly by the strong instinct of self-preservation, partly by the assistance of a friendly hand, and eventually got down, safe and sound, at the sign of the White Bear, in Piccadilly.

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## CHAPTER II.

### MONS. PERROTIN FINDS A FRIEND AND HEARS A LOVE STORY.

ALONE on the London pavement in the gray of the morning, with his little bundle tightly grasped in his hand, Monsieur Perrotin looked round inquiringly, uncertain whither to bend his steps. Two or three passengers by the "Telegraph" had gone into the hotel, but the French traveller, remembering his scanty purse, and the charges at the Blue Posts, hesitated to follow their example.

While he lingered, a tall, handsome, military-looking young man, who was waiting to have his luggage taken out

of the coach, came up and addressed him: it was the owner of the friendly hand.

"You seem to be a stranger, sir, in London," he said.

"Oh, yas!" replied Monsieur Perrotin, "I am very strange. It is the first time of my life that I come here."

"And have you no acquaintance in this great city?"

"Yas, I have somm. Not a great many. But it is too soon to call to them, and where is their house I do not know."

The young man smiled.

"It is," he said, "rather too early for a morning visit, and I am in the same predicament as yourself—that is to say, about calling. I think you had better do as I do. I mean to put up here. It's not a bad house of its kind, and one is sure of getting something to eat. I don't know how you feel, but travelling all night outside the coach has made me very hungry. Do me the favour of breakfasting with me!"

There was something so off-hand and good-natured in this offer—which a rapid survey of Monsieur Perrotin's little bundle had suggested—that it was not to be resisted. The teacher of languages bowed, and said it should give him a great pleasure.

They were soon very comfortably seated at breakfast, and Monsieur Perrotin, who required little pressing, entered into the history of his adventures. He told his entertainer all that the reader knows, interspersed with various details, chiefly relating to the subject that was uppermost in his mind, the events of the three days of July. As an eye-witness of those events he had not very much to say, for the moment the firing began in the streets he shut himself up close in his room, and never left it till all was over; but this trifling circumstance did not prevent him from giving a very picturesque account of the revolution, mainly derived from his own scared imagination. His strongest point, however, was the manner in which he had effected his retreat from the blood-stained streets of Paris. It was a piece of strategy, as he described it, to which there was nothing comparable in the annals of retrograde movement.

"And your wife and family?" asked his new friend, who took it for granted that a person of Monsieur Perrotin's

appearance must be so accommodated. "Did they escape with you?"

"I have not a wife," replied Monsieur Perrotin—"not any littel shild. I have only myself and my effects. It was not mosh to take," he added, with a half-suppressed sigh.

The young man made a quick gesture as if about to say something, but checked himself, and was silent for a few moments. At length he appeared to have made up his mind.

"I hope," he stammered, "you won't be offended at what I'm going to say, but perhaps you didn't bring much money with you. Now it's a hard thing to be driven out like that, and come to a strange country. If you happen to be short, I shall be very happy to lend you some."

He took out his purse as he spoke.

Monsieur Perrotin's eyes glistened, and the piece of toast he was in the act of swallowing very nearly choked him.

"You are a good person, sir," he said, seizing the young stranger's hand, and closing it upon what it held. "But, I thank you, no! It is not a great deal I have, but before that is gone, I have hopes to get more. There is in London one very great lady whose daughters I have the honour to teach in Paris. Madame Scrop will give me to do when she know that here I am."

At this name the young man changed colour, and asked where the lady lived.

Monsieur Perrotin had recourse to his pocket-book, and, spreading it wide open on the table, pointed to the entry he had made.

"I can make nothing of this," observed the youthful Amphitryon, repressing a strong desire to laugh at what he saw; "I never heard in all my life of 'Grinram Kipper.' And what on earth does 'Shut' mean? I'll venture to say there's no such place in London!"

"Ah, but you must be mistake: my young lady have wrote it down herself. See!"

He took out a piece of paper and placed it beside his own copy.

The young man glanced at the writing and again changed

colour. He bent his head over it, as if for the purpose of closer examination. When he looked up again, he said :

"The mistake is yours. I believe I can make this out. 'Mrs. Scrope'—we don't in England put 'Esquire' after a lady's name, that only belongs to gentlemen, you observe it is not so in the original : 'Mrs. Scrope, No. 64, Grosvenor'—yes, it certainly *is* Grosvenor—'Upper Grosvenor'—only the word 'Upper' has been added, to distinguish it from 'Lower'—and what you took for 'Shut' is 'Street.' It's plain enough now. Lucky you had this to show. I defy the cleverest hackney-coachman in London to have found out the place by your description."

Monsieur Perrotin's face lengthened.

"But so I address my letterre to Madame Scrop."

"Then it's fifty to one if she has received it. However, that don't so much matter, I suppose, since you have come here yourself. Do you know Mrs. Scrope well ?"

"Certainly I know her. Madame Scrop is one grand personage, but very kind for me."

"And—her—her daughters. You liked them ?"

"It should be impossible not; all two of them are so equally good and handsom."

"Which did you admire most, now ? Agatha or Edith ?"

"How, then ! You also are acquaint with those agreeable misses ?"

"I—I—that is, I have met them frequently in society."

"Where you see them ? Not in Paris ?"

"No—not in Paris. Mrs. Scrope was in the Isle of Wight this summer, after she came from abroad. I am quartered there with my regiment."

"Your are an officer, perhaps ?"

"Exactly. Here's my card. Lieutenant Walter Cobham, of the Rifle Brigade."

"Monsieur Cobham, I am very much oblige. Now I shall answer your question. It is the elderly sisterre I think the finest."

"Elderly ! What do you mean ? Edith Scrope is not elderly !"

"She is the old one. Not so ?"

"Oh, I see ! Yes, you're right in that respect. Edith

is a year older than Agatha, but she'll be only eighteen the tenth of next month."

"Ah, ha!" said Monsieur Perrotin, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "you know that!"

Lieutenant Walter Cobham blushed exceedingly,—a propensity he could no more get the better of, than he could conquer the eager frankness of his nature, which always led him to betray his closest secrets.

"Monsieur Perrotin," he said, "I haven't known you long"—the exact time was thirty-five minutes—"but I think I can trust you."

The teacher of languages placed his hand on his heart, and, if the grateful expression for the more than civility which Walter Cobham had shown him might be relied on, the young man had not been wrong in his hasty calculation.

"I'll tell you all about it, then, if you like to listen."

The speaker did, however, take the precaution of looking round him, to see if they were alone in the room, before he went on. Having satisfied himself on this point, he continued:—

"The fact is, Monsieur Perrotin, Miss Scrope—that is, Edith—and myself are engaged. Only it's an odd business. No one knows anything about it but ourselves. You see the Isle of Wight is a great place for parties of pleasure, pic-nics, and all that sort of thing. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yas! vary well. I have pique-nique myself with the family of Madame Scrop, in the forest of Montmorency. We had *baudets*—donkeys, I think—and strawberries at the hermitage of Rousseau, where Miss Edith play on the piano of Grétry."

"Ah, you have heard her play! Isn't it beautiful? What a voice she has, too! I never heard anything like it—on the stage or off it. Well, I was telling you about our parties, sometimes in carriages, to one place or other, sometimes in boats, sailing round the island."

"On the sea!" exclaimed Monsieur Perrotin, with a shiver. "Ah, mon Dieu! Quel triste plaisir!"

"On the sea—of course," returned Walter Cobham. "What can be more delightful?"

Monsieur Perrotin groaned.



"Thrown together in this kind of way, wasn't it the most natural thing in the world that I should fall in love with Edith Scrope? It was at Carisbrooke Castle, in the ruins; I was helping her round the walls when I stopped and told her all about it. I asked her to have me. She didn't say 'No,' and she didn't say 'Yes'—not at first, at least, but afterwards she consented. Only there was a difficulty in the way: she was afraid to tell her mother. I offered to go at once and speak to her, but Edith wouldn't let me. I know Mrs. Scrope is very rich and very proud, and wants her daughters to marry men of rank and fortune, for that's what she is always saying. I know, too, I've neither one nor the other, but my father was a gentleman, and so am I, and people can live, if they like, on very little. I fancy if I was allowed the opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Scrope, I could make her hear reason."

Monsieur Perrotin smiled.

"What, you think not! Ah, that's like Edith. 'Walter,' she said, in her very last letter, 'I'm persuaded mamma won't listen to anything at present. She has very strong feelings—prejudices, perhaps, I must call them. We must wait for time to remove them.' Now, waiting is impossible, for my regiment is ordered out to Canada, and if I go abroad before we're married fifty things may happen. So I decided at once. The minute I received Edith's letter I went to the commanding officer, and asked for leave between the returns. He gave it me directly, and I started for town yesterday afternoon, to try and see her somehow. Now, what is your advice? How should you act in my position?"

"Shall you go see Madame Scrop?"

"That's just what I should like. I see you agree with me. I ought to go. But Edith won't hear of it. She says there would be an end of everything. She don't even want me to call, for fear of exciting her mother's suspicions, so what I must do is this: I must get Edith to meet me privately, and then we can come to a thorough understanding. Letters never say half enough, and I'm obliged to be very cautious in writing. I think it quite a godsend I met with you, and I'll tell you why. You wouldn't mind taking a note for me? I declare I should be so thankful! You'd be the best fellow in the world!"

Although Monsieur Perrotin had some difficulty in following the impetuous lover through all he said, he perfectly comprehended the nature of the service that was required of him. He was himself of an impressionable character, felt interested in the story he had heard, and was really grateful for the young officer's proffered kindness and positive hospitality. As a Frenchman, also, he did not see any great impropriety in abetting a love affair, and therefore very readily expressed his willingness to do what Walter Cobham requested. At his instance he also consented to remain at the hotel for the present, instead of seeking a lodging elsewhere.

With various conversation, in the course of which both Walter Cobham and Monsieur Perrotin went over a good deal of their former ground, love passages and scenes of terror alternating, the morning was occupied until the hour arrived when the teacher of languages might reasonably hope to be admitted in Upper Grosvenor-street.

As Monsieur Perrotin did not, of course, know an inch of the way, Walter Cobham undertook to be his escort there and back : he accompanied him to within a short distance of Mrs. Scrope's house, and when he saw the door closed upon him, took up a position in the neighbourhood, and anxiously waited the result of the Frenchman's mission.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### MONSIEUR PERROTIN'S PATRONESS.

MRS. SCROPE's intentions in marrying her daughters had been correctly described by Walter Cobham.

Herself of aristocratic birth, and a wealthy heiress when she espoused a gentleman of equal rank and estate, she never for an instant admitted the idea of derogation in her family. Her husband had died within three years of her marriage, leaving only the two girls, Edith and Agatha, to succeed to his large unentailed possessions, and thus, from their infancy, Mrs. Scrope began to expect for them matches

with the highest in the land. As their fortunes accumulated during their minority, with great personal beauty also for their share, this expectation, if it did not acquire force, certainly did not diminish. In the pride of hereditary station, Mrs. Scrope considered the world as composed of only two classes, her equals and her inferiors, whose positions she regarded as immutable.

She admitted no qualification of money, genius, success, or—as she phrased it—“any other accident,” to raise to her level those not born to the distinction. However condescending, familiar, or friendly her behaviour to people whom she looked upon as of inferior condition to herself, the law she had made she never broke: her identity was kept quite distinct from theirs. She was liberal enough of patronage, but the persons who were the objects of it always felt that they had a patron. To assume an equality with Mrs. Scrope, unless you were of the privileged order, was to lose her protection for ever.

If such was the principle on which she acted towards society in general, it may easily be believed that its strictness underwent no relaxation where the affairs of her own family were concerned. No one, she felt assured, would venture to think of her daughter without first addressing her. It did not enter into her mind to conceive the possibility that anybody could aspire to mingle his blood with that of her race who did not boast an equally illustrious descent, and she took less than the ordinary precautions against so very possible a contingency.

It was owing to this circumstance that Mrs. Scrope had never perceived what consequences might arise from the intercourse which was permitted between Edith and Walter Cobham during her summer sojourn in the Isle of Wight. She found the young officer in the houses where she visited, and saw him, with others, attentive to her daughters, but drew no inference from the fact. Had she been told that there was danger in such attention, she would have ridiculed the idea with contemptuous scorn. There was nothing, then, to prevent Edith and Walter from falling in love.

It was as well, perhaps, for his own prospect of success—as ill, it may be, for the issue—that Walter Cobham's choice had fallen upon the elder instead of the younger sister, for

Agatha had much of her mother's pride, and held lineage in high esteem. Edith, on the contrary, never gave the subject a thought. According to her belief, her lover had in him all "those noble qualities that merit love;"—of the nobility of birth she made no account. Who he was, she never asked; what he was, alone she cared for.

Only when it was too late, when they had mutually pledged their faith, Edith remembered her mother's opinions, and questioned Walter about himself. His answer was not of a kind to remove her suddenly-awakened fear. He was the orphan son of a brave soldier, who had died in the service of his country with only the rank of captain; but of his father's family there was only the tradition, from Ireland, that it was ancient and had been wealthy, and his mother, he knew, was the only child of a merchant in one of our colonies who left no fortune behind him. Walter Cobham stood, therefore, literally alone, with nothing in his favour but his good looks, his good heart, and the abilities which, at Sandhurst, had—at an earlier age than usual—secured him a commission in the army. Small recommendations these to the notice of Mrs. Scrope.

In Edith's relation to her mother, the feeling which predominated was dread. There was too much ambition in Mrs. Scrope's haughty nature to leave room in her breast for the expansion of maternal love: those who belonged to her were simply parts of a system which she governed; and the true, deep, and earnest affection which should have subsisted between parent and child, was entirely wanting. Hence Edith's apprehension of her mother's wrath, if she prematurely disclosed her engagement to Walter Cobham; hence her desire to gain time, the great delusion of all who have only hope to live on.

Mrs. Scrope and her daughters were severally employed when the arrival of Monsieur Perrotin was announced. Edith was practising an air—perfect already in some one's belief, but which she thought capable of being made more so; Agatha was painting flowers; and Mrs. Scrope herself was engaged in writing letters, a bracket filled with unanswered ones standing before her; amongst the latter was not the missive of Monsieur Perrotin, the sagacity of the

post-office clerks having failed to decipher the superscription.

All looked round with surprise on hearing the French teacher's name. Mrs. Scrope expressed hers audibly.

"Monsieur Perrotin!" she exclaimed. "What has brought you to England?"

"Alas! madame," he said, "I perceive that my infortune is unknown. Never has my letter reach you."

"There has been no letter," replied Mrs. Scrope. "When did you write?"

Monsieur Perrotin explained the circumstances, and was about to suggest that he had made a mistake in the address, but remembering who had set him right in that respect, he checked himself in time, and presumed that his letter had not been forwarded. Mrs. Scrope scarcely heard his answer, having resumed her occupation, and the poor teacher was still standing—stricken with the awe which her presence always caused him—when Edith, rising from her music, came forward and gave him her hand.

"I am so glad to see you again," she said; "pray sit down!"

Mrs. Scrope raised her head with an expression on her countenance which Monsieur Perrotin perfectly understood. She looked at him steadfastly for a few moments.

"You may sit down," she said; "I will speak to you presently, when I am quite disengaged. Go back to your music, Edith. It is a pity that the elder sister should have to learn from the younger."

She alluded to Agatha, who, after the first momentary surprise at Monsieur Perrotin's appearance, had continued painting.

The teacher of languages suppressed a sigh, less for himself than Edith; and his desire to serve his accidental friend increased. For the present he remained silent, watching Mrs. Scrope.

The great lady finished her letter at last.

"Well!" she said, "how came *you* to leave Paris?"

"But, madame, this fatal revolution."

"What had you to do with it? How did it affect you?"

"Madame, I lose all the friends I have. There remain

to me only those which are of England. Besides, I love not Paris. I follow after my king."

These last words—the natural expression of Monsieur Perrotin's political sentiments—operated favourably with his patroness.

"In that respect," she said, "you did right. The people of Paris are *vraie canaille*. Those who have no respect for station ought at once to be put down by the strong arm. I would have shown them no mercy! But I am not surprised at what has happened. France has never recovered from the blow which was struck at the nobility in the first revolution. Without an hereditary peerage, how can a country prosper?"

"It is true, madame, what you say. Where there are no great ones, upon who can depend the poor?"

"And what do you mean to do in England?"

"I will exert myself, madame, to teach my tong, and those language with who I am acquaint."

"Pupils! Well, I dare say I can procure you some amongst my friends. My daughters are now almost beyond the age. But your French is very pure, I know; they may still profit by your accent. You will begin by coming here next week; the days we can fix on by-and-by. Have you got a lodging?"

"I am descended for the moment at the Hotel of White Bear, Piccadilly."

"Of course for the moment only. That is not a proper address. You must live in a private house. There are plenty to suit your means in London. I dare say you are in want of money. Take this!"

It was in form the same offer that Walter Cobham had made, but how different in reality! One was the spontaneous effusion of a generous heart, which pride had made him refuse, the other the dole of careless wealth, which poverty compelled him to accept: but the few sovereigns in Walter Cobham's purse were far more precious in the eyes of Monsieur Perrotin, than Mrs. Scrope's twenty-pound note—even if it had been increased five-fold.

"You will stay to luncheon, Monsieur Perrotin," continued Mrs. Scrope, in her great condescension, "and then I can hear the history of your escape: at present I am too



busy. Take a French play, one of Molière's—there is an edition in that case—and one of my daughters shall read to you. You want to copy those flowers, Agatha, while they are fresh? Then it must be you, Edith. Reading differs from music, it distracts one's attention more. Sit at the other end of the next room, near the conservatory; I shall not hear you then."

The reading began. Here was the opportunity for delivering Walter Cobham's note which Monsieur Perrotin had hoped for; but now that it presented itself, he, for the first time, doubted if he were doing right in availing himself of it. Mrs. Scrope was his benefactress, however unpalatable the way in which she showed her kindness. Should he repay an obligation by an act that resembled, if it were not, treachery? Miss Scrope's lover was an utter stranger to him until that morning, and his project was clandestine.

"Strong, both, against the deed."

On the other hand, all his sympathies were with Edith and Walter Cobham. He had, moreover, made a promise—rashly, perhaps, but still a promise, and that concerned his honour. He must keep it, *coûte que coûte*, but he would not lend himself to such a scheme again—the old excuse for going wrong, when inclination is at war with principle. And like all who do wrong, the consequences came home one day to the wrong-doer.

He was more occupied with his thoughts than the play which Edith had chosen, though he seemed to listen with close attention; but having at length made up his mind, he raised an objection to the reading of a particular passage and, asking for the book, declaimed for a few minutes in rigorous accentuation, and when he returned the volume there rested between the leaves the note of Walter Cobham. To prevent an exclamation from Edith, he repeated a line which had caught his eye,—

"Garde-toi de rien dire, et me laisse un peu faire."

—Voilà, mademoiselle! Lisez-le comme ça. N'appuyez pas trop sur les mots."

Edith had instantly recognized Walter Cobham's handwriting, and instinct prompted her to conceal the note,

wondering all the while how Monsieur Perrotin came to be the bearer of it. She turned again to the page, but her voice was now so agitated, that the effort to read was vain; Monsieur Perrotin also became embarrassed, and the situation might have been awkward for both if luncheon had not been opportunely announced. Edith rose at the summons, and the *séance* was broken up.

"Has she preserved her accent?" asked Mrs. Scrope.

"Oh, perfectly, madame," returned Monsieur Perrotin. "A littel *timide* for the want of practice; but for the *prononciation* there is noting to say."

"Others as well as myself will be glad to hear this, Edith," said Mrs. Scrope, turning to her daughter with a significant look.

Edith blushed and cast down her eyes, and followed her mother without reply.

Mrs. Scrope's solicitude on the subject of Monsieur Perrotin's adventures was not very great, for she never once questioned him about them. Her conversation turned entirely upon the extraordinary merits of a certain Lord Deepdale, the son of one of her dearest friends. He was expected in town in a few days from a long tour on the Continent; and if he had been a son of her own, Mrs. Scrope could hardly have expressed greater satisfaction at the prospect of meeting him.

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## CHAPTER IV

### LOVERS.

As soon as Edith was alone, she eagerly read her lover's letter. Too fondly attached, she could not refuse his request, though, in agreeing to meet him, her consent was clogged with the usual maidenly stipulation—"for that once only." "Indeed," her answer said, "she should not have consented at all, if something had not occurred which she could not write about."

For Edith's misfortune, her sister's nature was as cold as

her own was warm, and thus she had never ventured to confide to Agatha the secret of her engagement with Walter Cobham. But, as a heart-secret must, for its own security, be told to some one, Edith was compelled to make a *confidante* of her maid, Rachel Loring.

An early walk in Kensington Gardens, with Rachel discreetly distant, afforded Walter the opportunity he sought, on the morning after his arrival in London. Having told Edith by what chance he had encountered Monsieur Perrotin, he anxiously inquired what the "something" was which she had to communicate. To the exclusion of every other thought, the purport of that little word had haunted him ever since he read it; and yet he had been no lover if his heart had not guessed its meaning.

"Your mother," he said, "has spoken to you of some one else?"

"You are right, Walter," replied Edith, mournfully; "and she has spoken in a way that, I fear, I cannot misunderstand. How arbitrary her decrees are, I need not remind you."

"But you will never submit to such tyranny?" exclaimed Walter. "By what right does she dispose of your affections?"

"You know well, Walter," said Edith, "that it is not in my mother's power to do that!"

He pressed her hand, and for a few moments both were silent.

"And whom," he resumed, "has she named?"

"A person whom I never saw, though I have heard a great deal of him: Lord Deepdale. He is about your age, Walter, or perhaps a year or two older; the heir to an earldom and an immense estate. His mother, Lady Delaval, and mamma, were brought up together—indeed, they are first cousins; and I imagine, from what mamma says, that it has long been a settled thing between them!"

"And where is he now, this Lord Deepdale?"

"On his way to England after three or four years' absence. Lord Delaval wrote to say that he was expected about the end of next month."

"About the end of next month!" repeated Walter Cobham. "Edith," he continued, "I also have something

to tell you. Our regiment has received the route; and by the time you speak of I shall have embarked for Canada."

"Oh, Walter, this is very sudden!"

"So sudden, Edith, that we must come to a speedy decision. Is every chance to be against me? Am I to lose you altogether?"

"Lose me, Walter! What do you mean? Do you think I would marry Lord Deepdale? Have I not pledged my word to you?"

"Ah! but, Edith, you little knew what you bound yourself to. You were ignorant of the claims of the service upon me. I myself never thought they would come to break our happy dream."

"A dream, Walter! To me it has been a reality."

"If we could make it so! But no! That is more than I dare ask."

"You speak in riddles, Walter. Is not our love a reality? Why should we cease to love?"

"You misunderstand me, Edith. I can never cease to love you."

"And do you doubt the strength of my affection?"

"No! no! But time and circumstances are sometimes terrible agents. See! in a few weeks I shall be gone, and another will stand on the ground I occupy, backed by your mother's authority."

"But I have told you, Walter, that Lord Deepdale can be nothing to me. I have given myself to you."

Walter Cobham drew Edith closer: he looked on her sweet face, and saw his own love mirrored in her eyes. He had striven against the temptation, but it was too powerful now to be resisted.

"Edith," he whispered, "dearest, my heart's life, will you marry me before I go?"

Edith became faint, and gasped for utterance.

"How can that be?" at length she faltered. "You would not have me fly from home—even to you!"

"I seek an assurance, love, beyond the power of the world to deprive me of. With the knowledge that you are irrevocably mine, the grief of absence might be borne. Whatever befell, I should then have the right to protect you. In three years—perhaps less—I shall get my pro-

motion, and return—a poor man still, no doubt, but with more of a home to offer.”

“Three years, Walter! Will you not believe that I can be faithful to you for that little space? It will be wiser—better for us to wait.”

“To wait, Edith! And to know that day by day, while I am from you, everything may be attempted to make you yield to your mother’s will! If the barrier I seek were interposed, compliance could not even be enforced!”

Edith was deeply moved.

“Oh, Walter,” she said, “you ask too much! I dare not take the step to which you urge me. Nothing in the shape of entreaty or menace can make me untrue. If I had sworn at the altar to be your wife, I could not feel more steadfastly bound to you. Will not that content you, Walter?”

“Edith,” he replied, sadly, “forgive the selfishness of passion. The sacrifice I ask is, indeed, too great! I must strive to find comfort in the promise you have given. But—but we shall meet once more before I go. I could not part with you—perhaps for ever—here!”

Edith could not speak for tears.

“When—when shall I see you?” urged her lover.

With a strong effort she mastered her emotion.

“I am afraid, Walter, to come to this public place any more. Besides, it was only accident that enabled me to be here to-day. But rely upon this—as I bid you rely on the promise I have made—I will not let you part without a last adieu. That kind Monsieur Perrotin, who has already helped us, will not refuse to do so again. I will write to you as often as I can, and he will bring me your letters.”

“Be it, then, Edith, as you say. I will not add to your pain by seeking more than you can give. Farewell for the present!”

They were alone in the most sequestered part of the gardens: he folded her to his heart in one long embrace, and left her!

## CHAPTER V

## MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

EDITH's resolution was very soon tested.

Not only determined upon the attainment of her objects, Mrs. Scrope was one who never could press them forward too quickly for her desire. It was a feature of her imperious character, to expect that everything must at once submit to her will. The slightest opposition awoke her anger, and her anger awakened was uncontrollable.

The fixed idea of Mrs. Scrope was the marriage of her daughters to the men whom she should choose, and since the speedy return of Lord Deepdale had been announced, she thought of nothing but the match with Edith.

Hitherto she had only alluded in general terms to the probability of the connection, but as the time drew near when he must appear as her future son-in-law, Lord Deepdale became her constant theme, and all vagueness on the subject was discarded.

One evening—it was about a fortnight after Edith's interview with Walter—Mrs. Scrope and her eldest daughter were alone together.

"Edith," she said, abruptly, "you are aware that you are very soon to be married."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Edith, turning pale.

Mrs. Scrope neither noticed the exclamation nor the change in her daughter's countenance.

"You remember what I said to you lately about your cousin Deepdale!"

"Yes, mamma."

"Within six months he will be your husband!"

Edith strove to reply, but it was impossible.

"I need not say that I suppose you are delighted with my choice."

Still Edith did not speak.

"Deepdale will have the largest estate in Leicestershire. No girl could marry better than you will, Edith. You may

be very thankful to Lady Delaval and me, that we have so decided it."

"Mamma," said Edith, summoning up courage, at last, to speak. "I have never seen my cousin since I was ten years of age."

"I dare say," observed Mrs. Scrope, indifferently, "you will not know him again."

"But something more than recognition is necessary, mamma. If he is to be—what you say,"—she could not utter the word her mother had used,—“I ought to know him well beforehand.”

"What need of that? Are you not blood relations? Deepdale is not a stranger to the family."

"To me he is, mamma."

"A stranger to you! What does the girl mean?"

"I may—not—like him."

"Oh," replied Mrs. Scrope, with a contemptuous toss of her head, "like or dislike is of no consequence!"

"Surely, mamma, it is of every consequence to the person most concerned."

"Edith," said Mrs. Scrope, severely, "you are disposed to be disputatious instead of being grateful."

"I cannot be grateful," said Edith, firmly, "for an unknown advantage."

Mrs. Scrope's eyes flashed fire.

"Do you dare, Edith, to question my authority?"

"I have never done so yet, mamma, but—but you are forcing a subject upon me for which I was unprepared."

"How, unprepared! unless you were stupid as you are evil-disposed? Don't answer me—I won't hear a word; you must have been prepared for what I have just told you! Have I not repeatedly—incessantly—spoken of Deepdale? To what purpose have I named him so often, if not to make you understand that he was to be your husband? I see no reason, indeed, why I should have troubled myself to prepare you at all, having once resolved that it should be so."

It was time for Edith to speak with all the decision she was capable of mustering.

"I, too, mamma, am resolved," she said; "I will *not* marry Lord Deepdale."

Mrs. Scrope's face became as white as ashes.

"Are you in your senses, Edith? Have you the temerity to rebel against my commands?"

"I have the right, mamma, to think of myself in a matter so all-important as marriage."

"To think of yourself! You!—a child—a creature devoid of sense, or heart, or mind, or feeling!—a thing incapable of estimating a mother's care! To whom do you owe everything, if not to me? And this is the reward of so many anxious years! At the moment when I confer upon you the greatest benefit that a parent can bestow, you turn, like a viper, and sting the bosom that has warmed you!"

Edith threw herself on her knees before her mother.

"For God's sake!" she cried, "reproach me not so bitterly. I have not deserved it."

"Lie there!" returned Mrs. Scrope, pacing the room, frantic with passion. "Grovel in the earth, base in spirit as you are wicked and heartless!" Then turning towards her with clenched hand, she added: "You have dared to raise your voice against mine. Listen, then, to this. If Deepdale were the worst, as he is the best of his race, you should marry him and no other. And the sooner, I swear it, for your unheard-of, your detestable obstinacy. Ay, humble yourself to the dust; you may well do so, you thankless—monstrous——"

Mrs. Scrope did not finish the sentence: her violence overcame her physical force; she threw herself on a sofa, and screamed with hysterical passion.

Edith rose from the ground, and rushed in terror to her mother. She had often experienced the effects of her temper, but never witnessed rage like this. Again she knelt beside her, chafing her hands, smoothing her brow, calling her by the most endearing names, incoherently promising all her mother desired, if she would only look up again and speak with kindness.

Though her words were lost in air, Mrs. Scrope did look up, but it was to fix upon Edith a glance that might have turned her to stone.

"Edith," she said, speaking slowly and dwelling upon every syllable, "if ever you hope to be forgiven, if you



would not incur my everlasting hatred, retract what you had the insolence to say just now. Promise me on your knees to marry Lord Deepdale!"

Again Edith burst into tears.

"Mother, mother!" she cried—"spare me, spare me! I cannot—cannot promise!"

"Leave my sight, hypocrite!" cried Mrs. Scrope, starting up with renewed fury. "Leave my sight! Never let me see your face till you come to my feet with tears of repentance."

Edith attempted once more to speak, but with a fierce gesture Mrs. Scrope motioned her to be gone, and she tremblingly obeyed.

It is a common saying, that passionate people forget the cause of passion as soon as its explosion is over; but if this be generally true, Mrs. Scrope was an exception to the rule. Her anger was not the irritation of temper only, but the mortification of deep-seated pride. The opposition of Edith in the present instance was a blow to the dearest project of her life. What if Agatha, also, should in her turn oppose her will! But no—she felt sure of her! And she would make sure, too, of Edith, whose blind, ungrateful obstinacy—thus ran the current of her thoughts—was quite unfathomable.

After a sleepless night—sleepless alike to both—Mrs. Scrope, setting aside her determination not to see or speak to Edith, sent for her as soon as it was light. It was to exact obedience, and tell her in the sternest language that she looked for immediate submission. The struggle between duty and love had wrung Edith's heart sorely, and if her mother had only shown the slightest tenderness, she must have yielded, even at the cost of future happiness. But the harsh, inflexible, bitter manner of Mrs. Scrope chilled the spring of her heart's affection, and turned its current aside to flow no more in its first direction. Under a sense of injury, Edith was as resolute as her mother; and resolutely, though tearfully, she refused the expected compliance. Mrs. Scrope then took another course. Inspired by a feeling which amounted now to positive aversion, she resolved to banish Edith from home till her rebellious spirit was broken.

What steps she took for this purpose, and what result attended them, will shortly be told.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### MRS. SCROPE'S PLAN, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

ON the skirts of a wide moor, far away in the North Riding of Yorkshire, was an estate which, from time immemorial, had formed part of the property of the Scrope family. During the first year of her marriage Mrs. Scrope had principally lived there, and it was at Scargill Hall—so the place was called—that Edith was born; but Mr. Scrope's health requiring a milder climate, he removed to the south of England, and after he died his widow seldom went to Yorkshire.

Except for the wild scenery in the midst of which it stood, Scargill Hall had little to recommend it as a place of residence. It was a gloomy, old-fashioned mansion, dating—at least a part of it which was turreted—from the period of the great contest between the houses of Scrope and Grosvenor for the right to bear the same arms. The chief scene of that famous feud was Cheshire, but wherever his property extended, the victor, Sir Richard Le Scrope, caused his triumph to be commemorated; and even at the time of Edith's birth, fragments of stained glass in the large staircase window still showed the blazon—*Azure, a bend or*,—which attested the defeat of Sir Richard's rival. Alterations, at long intervals, had been made in the original building, but no alteration had succeeded in converting the house into a comfortable dwelling. Mrs. Scrope's greatest objection to it, however, consisted in the extreme loneliness of the situation, the nearest town of any consequence being ten or twelve miles off, and nobody of her rank in life living within visiting distance. She soon, therefore, gave up the idea of living there at all; but as her pride would not suffer her to let her houses, Scargill Hall remained untenanted, a housekeeper and one or two inferior servants being its only

occupants from one year's end to another. The estate was managed by an agent, who duly transmitted the rents, and there ended the interest which the owner took in the place.

But there is always a use for everything, and when the moment arrived, as she thought, for making it useful, Mrs. Scrope remembered Scargill Hall: in the solitude of that lonely abode Edith should learn what it was to oppose her mother's will.

Prompt in all her actions, Mrs. Scrope lost no time in carrying out her intentions, and as soon as she had ascertained that her instructions were understood, she bade Edith prepare to leave London. Two days were allowed for that purpose; on the third she was to set out. Edith offered no remonstrance, for she well knew how unavailing it would have proved, in the frame of mind in which her mother then was. The banishment which Mrs. Scrope considered as so severe a privation, would, of itself alone, have been a relief, for Edith felt that there can be no greater punishment than for those to meet who are estranged; but that banishment involved, if not an eternal separation from Walter Cobham, absence without the prospect of seeing him for many years to come. She feared even that it would be out of her power to redeem her promise of seeing him once more to say farewell, and with a sorrowful heart she wrote to tell him so. If they could not meet, she said, Walter must keep that letter as a token of her unalterable fidelity. But while she sent him her last adieu, she did not forget to name the route by which she was to travel, nor how she was to be accompanied.

With reference to the latter arrangement, Mrs. Scrope had decided on sending Edith to the north under the charge of Rachael Loring and Monsieur Perrotin. To make the poor teacher of languages wholly dependent, in the first instance, upon her bounty, Mrs. Scrope did not hurry herself to procure him pupils, assigning as her reason that scarcely any of her acquaintance were in town: in the mean time, she said, he might come to Grosvenor Street every day, an invitation which the simple-minded Frenchman accepted in the most thankful spirit, earnestly professing his desire to render his patroness any service she

might require. His words were not thrown away upon Mrs. Scrope, and the first use she resolved to put him to was to act as her daughter's escort, since, trustworthiness apart, it was less in his power than in that of any other person to speak of her family affairs. Edith's health was made the pretext of the journey, and Mrs. Scrope arrogantly assumed that he would never think of inquiring if there were any other cause for it.

At a very early hour, then, on the morning appointed, with no leave-taking save a careless good-bye from Agatha, who merely wished her a pleasant journey, Edith took her departure. At the last moment she turned to look for her mother, whom she had not yet seen. Mrs. Scrope was standing at her dressing-room window; her eyes were steadily directed to Edith, but no gleam of affection softened their expression; and with a full heart the desolate girl hastily stepped into the carriage, and, throwing herself back, gave way to her pent-up tears.

For the first half-hour the party travelled in complete silence, Edith absorbed in grief, and her companions too respectful to offer a syllable of remonstrance. Rachel Loring, who was of a very affectionate disposition, ventured, indeed, to take one of her young mistress's hands and hold it between her own, while Monsieur Perrotin, with a wistful look, and pondering over the cause of this more than common sorrow, sat watching for the opportunity of administering a few words of comfort.

By degrees Edith became more composed, and when they were fairly clear of the town, and the country opened out before them, the teacher gently addressed her, praising the freshness of the morning, admiring the beauty of the scenery, and cheerfully—though, perhaps, not very conscientiously—contrasting all he saw at the expense of all he had left behind, till he at length succeeded in distracting her attention from her own melancholy thoughts. Having achieved this object, the natural gaiety of his nation shone out; and as he conversed in English, out of compliment to Rachel Loring, a pretty, dark-eyed young woman, who understood no language but her own, his mistakes caused more than one smile as well on the part of Edith as on that of her maid, and then Monsieur Perrotin

became "more happyful as nevare he had been before," and chattered away without intermission. Under this influence, and sustained, it might be, by some secret hope, Edith's spirits revived, and if she did not actually enjoy the journey, she bore it with apparent contentment.

In the year eighteen hundred and thirty there were but one or two short lines of railway in all the kingdom, and the party travelled post in a private carriage, halting for the night at convenient distances. In this way four days were consumed in reaching York. After leaving that city, where they stayed rather longer than usual, Monsieur Perrotin, if he had been as suspicious as he was goodnatured, might have observed a remarkable change in Edith. The calmness which had hitherto characterized her was now succeeded by extreme restlessness, her replies to Monsieur's Perrotin's observations were wide of the mark, her colour went and came at the slightest sound of wheels or horses' feet, and, as if in spite of her endeavours to the contrary, she kept constantly looking out of the carriage window and then as quickly drawing back again. These were certainly tokens of expectation of one kind or other. Was it a nervous dread as she drew near her destination, or had Edith received some intelligence which affected the issue of her journey?

What was a secret to Monsieur Perrotin must be none to us. At York, Edith had found an answer at the post-office from Walter Cobham. It told her that his regiment was under orders for immediate embarkation; that within ten days from the time he wrote the transports were to sail, but that, having represented the most urgent private affairs, he had obtained leave of absence during the interval, and trusted to be able to overtake her within a few hours after the receipt of his letter, and meet her at a given place. What else he said—what protestations of love, what joyous anticipations, what anxious doubts and fears—need not be repeated: Edith's throbbing heart responded to them all.

Unsuspicious as he was, and—up to that time—inexperienced in all that related to the tender passion, Monsieur Perrotin might yet have attributed something of Edith's preoccupation to the right cause, since he had been placed,

to a certain extent, in the confidence of the lovers, only for one slight circumstance: a sensation never felt by him before had suddenly taken possession of his bosom. Politeness made him talk to Miss Scrope, but inclination fixed his eyes—and, with his eyes, his thoughts—on Miss Scrope's pretty maid. Though Monsieur Perrotin had not the slightest pretension to good looks, no one would have called him a positively ugly man, the expression of his countenance being so amiable: but even if ugliness had marked him for her own, it is a question whether that would have militated against his success. It is a mistake to suppose that women are always captivated—as men so generally are—by mere personal beauty. Attention to them, admiration of them—even though these demonstrations be only silently proffered—occupy the first place in their minds; if the lover is handsome into the bargain, so much the better, but when they have the man safe they easily dispense with personal attractions. On this account, Miss Rachel Loring did not look disdainfully—foreigner though he was—upon Monsieur Pascal Perrotin. He was a person of education, greatly superior to her in position; for aught she knew—indeed, as she supposed—he was a gentleman born; and in all these points of view was a conquest worth making. Added to which, he was extremely lively, good-tempered, and agreeable, and really—if he meant anything—a young woman in service might do worse. That he did mean something could hardly be doubted, or why did he look at her so constantly, why smile so tenderly whenever their glances met? This idea had found room to expand, for it was already three days old: it was conceived, if Rachel remembered rightly, on the morning after they left Grant-ham, when he helped her into the carriage, and had since grown till it reached its present conjectural shape. It was not long, however, before conjecture assumed the form of certainty.

According to the plan laid down by Mrs. Scrope, the journey was to have terminated on the fifth day after leaving London; but the detention at York—for which the Minster gave a fair pretext—made the accomplishment of this design impossible, and evening was beginning to close in when the travellers arrived at Catterick Bridge.

Here Edith alleged personal fatigue and the lateness of the hour as a reason for going no further; and though Rachel Loring was well aware of what Mrs. Scrope's displeasure would have been had she known of any departure from her orders, she would not oppose her young mistress's wishes. After all, she thought, it could make no difference whether they got to Scargill that night or early on the following day: a letter to intimate their arrival would reach London no later.

Was Edith Scrope really fatigued? Did she feel apprehensive of travelling late, or was she influenced by any other motive in choosing to rest at Catterick?

Had Monsieur Perrotin and Rachel Loring been less occupied with each other, they might have more particularly noticed the Carlisle mail, as it passed them between York and Boroughbridge; and in noticing the Carlisle mail their attention might have been attracted to one or two military-looking young men who sat outside. If Edith had quicker eyes than they on this occasion, it must be ascribed to the fact that she had a greater interest in the matter than either Monsieur Perrotin or Rachel Loring.

At the period of which this history treats, Catterick Bridge was celebrated for its inn—the prettiest and most comfortable, if not in all England, certainly on the great north road. But the charm of its situation, with its hanging garden above the swift-dashing current of the romantic Swale—the comfort of its interior, so well provided against all a traveller's wants—were nothing to Edith Scrope. The Catterick Bridge Inn had been named by Walter Cobham as the place of rendezvous: it was there that the lovers were to meet and part—perhaps for ever!

The fatigue which Edith had already pleaded was her excuse for wishing to be left alone, and her maid was dismissed very soon to dine with Monsieur Perrotin. This arrangement was disagreeable to neither of the persons who were thus unreservedly brought into contact. "I shall see!" said Rachel to herself. "This shall be an opportunity," soliloquized the French teacher. And how did he improve that opportunity? Travel had only so far affected the appetites of both as to make them even sharper than usual; and Monsieur Perrotin, while he took

very good care of himself, took still greater care of the charming *femme de chambre*. He pressed her with the choicest morsels, persuaded her to taste—yes, just to taste—a little more of the finest amber ale that ever was brewed—brighter far than the wine, which neither cared for; and, finally, when the repast was at an end, had no great difficulty in inducing the pretty Rachel to put on her bonnet and take a moonlight walk that quiet autumn evening.

There is no saying how far two persons may walk, or how long they may linger beneath the moon's rays, when their thoughts are in common; but certain it is that the walk taken by Monsieur Perrotin and Rachel Loring must either have led them very far, or have been very leisurely performed, for it was past ten o'clock when they returned to the inn. It is just possible that Rachel Loring may have felt a little confused at the significant smiles with which the landlord, landlady, chambermaid, barmaid, and boots all greeted Monsieur Perrotin and herself on their entrance, and the awkward consciousness of having stayed out rather too late may have been the cause why she hurried off to bed without even wishing her companion good night. As for Monsieur Perrotin, he seemed to be still taking that moonlight walk, still dreaming of something excessively pleasant, for he neither exhibited confusion nor betrayed any out-of-the-way consciousness, but simply requested in his best English, which was all but Greek to the honest Yorkshire folks, that they would "knock him hard next day."

He was knocked harder than he desired, and in a fashion rather different from that which he had anticipated.

It was about six in the morning, when a very agreeable dream which had visited Monsieur Perrotin was suddenly dissipated by the voice of her of whom he was dreaming.

"Musseer Pascal—Musseer Pascal—get up like a dear Musseer, and come and help me look! Whatever has happened to Miss Edith!"

"Comment done!" cried the French teacher, springing up into that attitude which the Academicians of his country describe by the words "*sur son séant*." "Vot you say? Miss Edith! Is she indispose? Have she swallow de charcoal smoke?"



"Oh, charcoal nonsense! Do get up, Musseer, will you? I can't find Miss Edith nowhere! She hasn't"—here Rachel began to sob bitterly—"she hasn't been to her blessed bed all night! Oh, do make haste!"

And, in her despair, Rachel tried the handle of Monsieur Perrotin's door.

"Attendez, mon amie," he shouted: "attendez que je passe mon pantalon. Wait till I put my trowser upon me! Ah, ah—voilà!"

At these words, half-dressed, but presentable, Monsieur Perrotin issued forth, eagerly demanding the meaning of all the outcry.

Rachel, as well as her sobs allowed her, explained that she had gone, according to custom, to call Miss Scrope; but receiving no answer after having knocked several times, she opened the door, which was neither locked nor bolted, and entered the room. To her surprise, she found it empty. At first she supposed her mistress might have got up early for a walk, but on looking closer she found the bed had not been slept in. Then her surprise became dismay, and how she got to Monsieur Perrotin's room she hardly knew.

The consternation of the French teacher at this intelligence equalled that of Rachel Loring. Had Miss Scrope been carried off by banditti? was the male suggestion. Had she made away with herself? was the feminine rejoinder. They both ran to the window which looked into the garden. There were no footmarks on the mould: no fluttering scarf or veil clung to the shrubs that overhung the river.

Unable to solve the mystery of Edith's disappearance, the only resource now left to her maid was to scream with all her might and endeavour to raise the house, for, singularly enough, none of the inmates had shown any signs of being disturbed at the noise already made.

Rachel's shrill summons, however, soon brought all the household up stairs.

"What was t' matter?" asked half a dozen voices, led off by the landlady.

"The matter!" cried Rachel; "matter enough! my young mistress has been spirited away in the night. Look here! She has never been to bed!"

And she tore aside the curtains as she spoke.

To her inexpressible astonishment, the landlady only smiled.

"Did you hear what I said?" screamed Rachel. "I tell you Miss Edith is gone. Where is she? Do any of you know?"

"Coom, coom," said the landlady, soothingly, "you munna tak' on so. I'll be bound for't t' young lady's safe."

"But where is she?" reiterated the disconsolate Rachel.

There was a pause of a few moments, during which everybody was silent. John Satterthwaite, the landlord, then stepped forward.

"No harm can coom on't now," he said; "thou mayst just as well know as not. T' young lady left while t' owd un and thee went to t' kirkyard last night. She was off a gay while afore thou coom back."

"Gone! Oh gracious! Where to?"

"Nobbut to t' blacksmith's, I think. There's a many travels along this road does t' same."

"The blacksmith's!" ejaculated Rachel; "what can you mean?"

"I mean," replied John Satterthwaite, "she's gone to t' Green to be married. They mun be there afore this!"

"And a bonnier lad for a husband," interposed Mrs. Satterthwaite, "no lass need wish for."

Rachel Loring was struck dumb with terror. The awful image of Mrs. Scrope rose at once before her. It was plain that Miss Edith had eloped.

While this brief colloquy was passing, Monsieur Perrotin had vainly strained his faculties to understand what was said, but the Yorkshire dialect proved a perfect stumbling-block. He was, moreover, sadly puzzled to account for the contrast between Rachel's anxiety and the cool indifference of the landlord and his wife, to whom Gretna Green marriages were things of almost daily experience. He turned to Rachel for an explanation.

She had, herself, to ask for more before she could reply.

At length she learnt all that was necessary for her to know. The Carlisle mail had changed horses at the inn about an hour before Miss Scrope's arrival. A handsome young man, who looked like an officer, had got down, and

ordered a bed, though, as John Satterthwaite said, with a grin, he did not sleep in it either. The handsome young man and the handsome young lady were afterwards seen walking in the garden, close to the river's edge. They were in conversation for upwards of an hour, and when they came back the officer ordered a pair of chaises—which, in Yorkshire vernacular, means four post-horses—and the postboys, Joe Murgatroyd and Geordy Talentyre—the landlord knew *their* names—were told to take the road to Appleby, and where that led to nobody need be told.

For a few minutes Rachel Loring and Monsieur Perrotin—whom the same danger now united more firmly than before—held counsel together in private. The result of their deliberations was an order for horses to follow the fugitives—if not to prevent, at all events to learn, the worst.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### HOW THE ADAGE WAS FIRST APPLIED.

It had cost Edith a hard struggle before she agreed to her lover's solicitation to fly with him and become his wife. She had even said farewell, and but for the adage which Walter's travelling friend, Captain Kilbryde, had more than once reminded him of during his journey on the top of the Carlisle mail, he might have turned away despairingly.

“‘Faint heart never won fair lady’—remember that, my boy,” were the captain's parting words as they separated at Catterick; and Walter did remember them at the critical moment, while still he lingered, clasping Edith's hand. His renewed entreaty was fatal to her resolve, and she yielded.

How they hurried away, while Monsieur Perrotin was explaining his own novel sensations to Rachel Loring, has already been told. Captain Kilbryde, their precursor by a few hours, had not been idle in the mean time; and when, early on the following morning, the lovers crossed the little river Sark, they found the Elliot of that ilk quite ready to perform his ministerial functions. The brief ceremony

over, Walter and Edith returned to Carlisle, and there, at the altar of Saint Cuthbert, they were married according to the rites of the Church of England, the clergyman who united them being the Reverend Laurence Topcliffe, and the attesting witnesses Captain Hercules Kilbryde of the Rifles, and Peter Lightfoot, parish clerk.

Up to this point all had gone well, but what were their plans for the future?

To tell the truth, they had formed none. Walter Cobham, in urging Edith to marry, had only been guided by the impulses of his own heart and the advice of his regimental ally, a very warm-hearted but not very prudent counsellor.

Edith's first thought, after the marriage, was to write and tell her mother all the truth; but then came the recollection of Mrs. Scrope's fury at conduct that bore no comparison to the act which she had now committed. If Mrs. Scrope could drive her daughter from her sight for simply refusing to marry Lord Deepdale, what likelihood was there that she would be more placable when she found that future compliance was impossible? Edith had been courageous on one occasion, but it was under strong excitement: she had time now to reflect, and the more she reflected the more certain she felt that forgiveness would be sternly refused. Nor was this all: she feared lest her mother, whom she held in instinctive dread, should wreak her vengeance on her husband.

Here were reasons enough for pausing before Edith place herself entirely in Mrs. Scrope's power, but there came others to support them.

It was chiefly to guard against the possibility of being forced into another marriage that Edith had consented to marry Walter at once. It had never been her intention to leave England precipitately, nor, however he might have wished it, had Walter made that a condition of their union. His present rank, the impossibility of taking her with him, or of providing for her suitably in his absence—all of which ought to have weighed with him before—were insuperable objections to such a scheme; and though hard to part under any circumstances, it was wiser, they both believed, to separate for a time, in the hope of better days! Wiser!

Ah, there is always great wisdom in the arrangements of lovers! Their foresight is, indeed, proverbial.

The conclusion, then, at which they mutually arrived, was to conceal their marriage. The actual fact was known only to those who were strangers to Edith's family. It was true that Edith's sudden disappearance must, in some way or other, be accounted for to Rachel Loring, and even to Monsieur Perrotin; but their fears, Walter suggested, would prove a safeguard in the first instance: they would soon discover which way Edith had gone; their first care would be to find her; and when found, Edith trusted that, at the very worst, she should be able to procure their secrecy. It was necessary, however, to insure an early meeting with them, and the question arose how this was to be accomplished. † They agreed to ask the opinion of Captain Kilbryde.

That gallant officer had already planned for the newly-married couple a nice little tour to the Lakes—the obvious accompaniment to a Gretna Marriage—the expense of which, with some other matters, it was his private purpose to defray; but when he heard that it was advisable for them to remain in Carlisle, he at once undertook to watch for Rachel Loring and her companion. He made this offer—though he never said so—at some inconvenience to himself, having particular business of his own to transact in London, whither he meant to have returned when his duty, as “best man,” was performed.

As soon, therefore, as breakfast was over, Captain Kilbryde left Edith and Walter to themselves, promising to give them the earliest information he should obtain. To serve his friends, the goodnatured Irishman would have walked right on till he met the persons he sought, but having luckily ascertained before he set out that there were two roads into Carlisle from the south, by either of which a carriage might arrive, he established himself at the Green Dragon, a small inn, convenient—as he said—to the entrance to the town, where, between expectation and contemplation, he passed his time.

What his expectations were, Captain Kilbryde's presence at the Green Dragon sufficiently declared: his contemplations centred on the image of a very handsome girl whom he

had danced with at the Tobercurry Hunt Ball about a twelvemonth before.

"Ah!" he soliloquized, with a melancholy shake of the head, "if we'd had such a place as this in Ireland, Honora O'Brien would this day have been Mrs. Captain Macbryde! Bad luck to the fellow that got her consent before I thought of asking it! Any how, Honora needn't have jumped at *him* for an offer! But to the devil with such thoughts! These people don't seem to be coming. If they were bound for Gretna on their own account they'd move a little faster!"

Captain Macbryde was ignorant of the real state of the case. Those to whom he alluded moved as fast as they could, but destiny sometimes depends upon a linchpin.

We left Rachel Loring and Monsieur Perrotin in a state of the utmost anxiety posting towards Appleby, which, as all know who have travelled that way, lies on the high road to the spot sacred to love—and lucre. But within a few miles of Appleby a wheel came off, the carriage was upset, and the village blacksmith being absent at a "Russlin," the damage done was not repaired till very late, and Monsieur Perrotin being, besides, a good deal shaken, further progress was delayed till next morning.

Captain Kilbryde remained at his post all day; he did not even leave it when night came on, but having ordered such a dinner as the Green Dragon afforded—brought in, by the way, by an uncommonly pretty barmaid—he, in the most soldier-like manner, sacrificed himself to duty, and sent a note to Walter to tell him what had *not* happened. These dispositions made, and dinner over, the captain, who sat sipping his punch, indulged in a little more contemplation, the object of which—if we are absolutely compelled to mention it—was not Miss Honora O'Brien, but rather the rosy-cheeked Phillis—the pretty barmaid aforesaid—who, though she didn't understand his compliments—or said she didn't—had exhibited the greatest alacrity and good-humour in waiting on him. If Captain Kilbryde heaved a sigh as he pulled on his nightcap when he betook himself to bed, it was not the forerunner of disagreeable dreams, but such as make sleep a delight and waking almost a regret. He got up, however, in excellent spirits, and finding that no "run-aways" had entered the town during the night, planted

himself at the door of the Green Dragon once more on the look-out.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning, and the self-appointed sentinel was beginning to feel hungry, when, with the Penrith road in full view, he espied a vehicle in the distance. There was a turnpike to get through—lovers had a good deal to pay in travelling north—and as it was close to the inn, Captain Kilbryde got there first. Walter Cobham had taken good care to point out Edith's carriage when the Carlisle mail passed it between York and Burroughbridge, and the captain saw it was the same. Monsieur Perrotin's remarkable features were also projected from the window, and they, with the sealskin *casquette* which surmounted them, were so unmistakably French, that to doubt that he beheld the teacher of languages was impossible. If any doubt had existed, it was immediately removed by his address to the gatekeeper.

"Monsieur," he said, in his politest manner, "can you give to me the informations upon a très jolie demoiselle and some young man which I am searching?"

The man opened his eyes as wide as he could; but as he did not by that process arrive at the foreigner's meaning, he replied to the only fact which interested him.

"Yan and fourpence," he said, in a broad Cumbrian accent.

"The gentleman wants to know," said a female voice from the carriage, "if you have seen anything of my young mistress; oh, do tell."

"I see so mony yoong missuses," returned the gatekeeper with a grin, "I can't surely say which uv 'em be thine. What was she like?"

"Oh, very beautiful, with long brown hair in ringlets, dark blue eyes, and such a sweet smile——"

"All uv 'em smurks when they cums through my yat, there's nobbut a few that's swaymus; a lile few they! Maybe I have seen t' lass, maybe no. You mun ax dawn th' town." And he pointed towards Carlisle as he spoke.

"I think," said Captain Kilbryde, who had been listening to this colloquy—"I think I can relieve the lady's anxiety. You mane Miss Scrope and Mr. Cobham."

"Oh, gracious!" exclaimed Rachel Loring, turning her face towards him.

"Mon Dieu!" murmured the amazed Monsieur Perrotin.

"Be kind enough to go at a walk, when you've paid the gate—quand vous avez payé la barrière, monsieur," explained the captain, proud of showing off his French, even in Cumberland—"allez doucement, and I'll tell you all you want to know. The fact is," he continued, addressing himself to Rachel, whose agreeable face—but no, the captain was not so inconstant as that, only it was a way with him—"the fact is, Mr. and Mrs. Cobham are both here in Carlisle."

"Oh me! it is Mr. C. then!" cried Rachel; "I was sure of it all along. Mrs. C. too! Well, I never!"

"What you say, sare?" demanded Monsieur Perrotin. "Mon Dieu, comme ils vont vite ces jeunes gens! Are you sure they marry?"

"Bien sûr, monsieur. J'y étais comme témoin, moi qui vous parle! I was there myself—I, Captain Hercules Kilbryde."

This announcement was made with a sweeping flourish of the captain's hat, to which Monsieur Perrotin responded by doffing his sealskin.

"But where are they, sir?" asked Rachel. "Pray take us to Miss Edith—Mrs. Cobham, that is."

Captain Kilbryde said he was on his way, now, to the hotel where she was staying; with permission, he would get into the carriage, and they could all drive up together.

From a whole day of utter forgetfulness to all that the world contained, except her husband, Edith was brought back by her faithful, affectionate Rachel, who with streaming eyes and broken voice rushed into her room, threw herself into her arms, and sobbed upon her shoulder.

"Oh, Miss Edith—Miss Edith—how could you!" said the girl, as soon as she could speak coherently. "If I'd walked after your coffin I couldn't have fretted worse than I've done ever since yesterday morning, when we first heard you was gone; and Musseer"—she added, with a slight hesitation—"Musseer Perrytin has been pretty nigh as bad as me. Oh, you don't mean to leave us again!"

"No," answered Edith, mournfully—"no, Rachel. I go with you to Scargill. But listen, Rachel. This paper is an



extract from the register of the church of St. Cuthbert, here in Carlisle. Read it; you will see that I am legally married. The time may come when your knowledge of the event may prove of importance. For the present, Walter and myself desire it to remain unknown. You must say so to Monsieur Perrotin. He will not betray us, Rachel?"

"Oh no! that he won't, Miss Edith, I can answer for it. He——" Rachel stopped short in some confusion, but Edith did not notice it.

"We will all, then," said Edith, "throw a veil over what has happened till brighter days allow us to raise it. I have been happy, Rachel—oh, how happy! But all my happiness will soon be over, for Walter leaves me to-day to return to his regiment. There is no help for it. We have nothing left but hope!"

Rachel comforted her mistress as well as she could: all that a kind, warm heart could prompt her to say she uttered, and Edith felt she had a friend on whom she might depend.

And, indeed, she needed one, for what was the prospect before her? Separation from all she held dear—and a dark vista, with one figure threatening through the gloom: that figure her own mother!

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHICH HAS WON?

AUTUMN, with its bright but swiftly-fading beauty, had set in, and Edith was at Scargill Hall; Walter Cobham, with a heart as heavy as her own, was on the way to Canada; Monsieur Perrotin, charged with the weight of a perilous secret, had returned to London; and Rachel Loring, no less oppressed by the same knowledge, remained with her young mistress. No accident had revealed to Mrs. Scrope the delay which took place before the journey, as she designed it, was completed, and to all appearance her decree had been implicitly obeyed.

Lord Deepdale's return from the Continent was not,

however, so immediate as had been expected: he still lingered in Italy, assigning indisposition as the reason for his stay. At any other moment this delay would have chafed Mrs. Scrope; but under existing circumstances she was well enough pleased at his continued absence, as it afforded more time for Edith's repentance.

"A winter at Scargill," she thought, "will bring her to her senses:" and, satisfied with this conclusion, Mrs. Scrope resumed her ambitious schemes, as if they ran no further risk of being thwarted; and, hasty in all things, began at the same time to occupy herself with a project of marriage for her youngest daughter. When she heard that Lord Deepdale was not likely to be in England just then, she went with Agatha to Brighton for the season, and from amongst the large circle of her wealthy and titled acquaintance soon fixed upon an eligible *parti*; but of this feature of Mrs. Scrope's domestic history we will speak presently.

Though not absolutely alone, Edith was left to many an hour of painful solitude. She had now full opportunity for considering the nature of the step she had so rashly taken; but while haunted by an undefinable apprehension, she saw not all its possible consequences. There must come a day, she feared, when she should have again to brave her mother's anger, for she knew how persistent she was in the prosecution of her plans; and of all the plans Mrs. Scrope had ever formed, the marriage of Edith with Lord Deepdale was the one nearest her heart. Edith foresaw much misery to herself in the opposition which, henceforward, became an inevitable necessity no less than an act of inclination; but her foreboding went no further, and it was, perhaps, as well.

What, on the other hand, was Edith's consolation—for there is no sorrow without something to compensate? It was an object slight enough in itself—a mere sheet of paper—all of us have had such treasures, keeping them, sometimes, till they are out of date:—it was a letter from Walter, the only one she had received since her marriage. It was written when he was on the point of embarkation—indeed, there was a postscript added after he had gone on board the transport, the latest news being always the most precious in the eyes of lovers—and the pilot to whom it was

intrusted conscientiously earned his guinea by posting it directly his boat retouched the shore. All that endearment could conceive or hope devise was contained in that letter, and not once, nor twice, nor twelve times a day, did Edith read it over : it was perpetually before her eyes, though not for the purpose of engrafting it on her memory : a single perusal had sufficed for that. But coming from him, and with no other memorial of her husband, Edith looked upon the letter as part of herself, and its resting-place was in her bosom, the bird of promise nestling in the ark.

Rather mistakenly, as it happened, Mrs. Scrope had placed Rachel Loring with her daughter more as a *surveillante* than an attendant, but at Scargill Hall she soon became her constant companion. The great secret of Edith's life was known to Rachel ; to her she could unreservedly speak of Walter ; with her picture a time of unexampled happiness. How that happiness was to be achieved was not very clearly laid down, but to cheat oneself thus is a delusion not altogether monopolized by the young and inexperienced.

On this speculative subject Rachel also had certain day-dreams, which, with the freedom inspired by kindness and confidence, she one day imparted to Edith. As may readily be supposed, they concerned Monsieur Perrotin, that moonlight walk at Catterick having borne fruit after its kind. When the teacher of languages should have realized enough by his profession to justify a double *ménage*, Rachel had agreed to assume his honoured name ; but, she said, it must be a very long while yet before that could come to pass. "Not so long, perhaps," Edith replied ; "for it should be her care, the moment she had it in her power, to reward Rachel's fidelity and affection. When Walter returned, then both would be free !"

If, then, Edith's present position were fairly weighed, she had sources of happiness, alike in hope and memory, which turned the scale in her favour. She was so newly a wife, and had seen so little of her husband, that separation from him was more a sentiment than a reality, and his absence—though it caused her deep sorrow—could not, of necessity, create that void which those experience, when parted, who have lived even for a few months together : it was a heavy grief to lose him, but Edith reckoned it a great gain to

have him to lose; she was supported, moreover, by the earnest and oft-repeated assurance in his letter that he would return to claim her before a year was over. Her mother's unkindness was a constant pain; but what she had brought upon herself, deservedly or not, Edith believed she had strength to bear. She was not disquieted by the dark shadow that fell across her path at moments when her visions were brightest, but against this feeling she strove with all the energy of youthful hope, and not always without success.

With respect to her external life, she experienced none of the privations which Mrs. Scrope had anticipated. Solitude was no punishment to Edith at any time: it was less so now than ever; and the very loneliness of her place of abode had an inexpressible charm in her present state of mind. As no restriction had been placed on her personal movements, Edith was able to roam at will amid the wild but picturesque scenery by which she was surrounded; within doors there were books: and thus, between exercise and reading, her time was chiefly occupied, and the days went by—not cheerfully, for there were too many causes for regret, but less unhappily than might have been imagined.

Mrs. Scrope's communications with her daughter were very infrequent and always indirect, Rachel Loring being made the medium of them; but one day, towards the close of January, a letter arrived at Scargill Hall addressed to Edith.

It was in her mother's handwriting; and as she broke the seal the same old dread came over her with which she had been so often shadowed. Nor was she wrong in her presentiment of coming evil.

The letter, with no introductory word of endearment, ran as follows:—

“I write to you sooner than I intended, circumstances having occurred the knowledge of which I prefer should be conveyed to you only by myself. Your sister Agatha, *who understands the duties of a daughter towards her mother*, has *freely and joyfully* accepted for her future husband *the person whom I have chosen*. I do not, however, intend that her

marriage shall take place *before your own*, that is to say, until the middle or end of August; but *understand me*, Edith: I have not, in any way, delayed my purpose *on your account*. It has arisen *solely* from family considerations—partly owing to Agatha's age, partly because of the health of your cousin, Deepdale, which, he writes me word from Florence, where he now is, will not admit of his travelling earlier than the spring. You have by this time, I trust, repented of your *wicked and ungrateful conduct*. On receiving a *full and complete* avowal of contrition for the past, with an *unconditional promise of obedience in the matter of your marriage*, I may again receive you into the favour which you *so justly forfeited*; only bear this in mind—my forgiveness *depends entirely* on your *unqualified submission*. I expect an *immediate* reply. "M. S."

What sudden emotion was it that made Edith tremble so violently while these words were yet swimming before her eyes? Why did she rise so quickly and press her heart with convulsive effort? What was the meaning of the strange joy that gleamed for a moment in her eyes, to be instantly succeeded by a look of such blank despair? Why did she strive to hide her burning face? and why, when her hands dropped listlessly beside her—why was her face pale as the sculptor's marble?

That cold, unfeeling letter—every line of which she might have predicted—could scarcely have moved her so!

Neither had it: the cause was deeper far. The unknown fear was realized.

A new life, while she read, had stirred in Edith's bosom.

"Oh, Walter!" she exclaimed, "God has decreed against my mother's will. Henceforth her desire is impossible."

But how was this startling truth to be revealed? Shut up by herself throughout that day, awake all night, Edith pondered over the words in which to tell her story. At length it shaped itself thus:—

"I do ask your forgiveness," she wrote, "but I will not deceive you. Sooner than I supposed, the hour has come for avowing all I have concealed. Mother, bear with me; be not merciless in your judgment, but listen to me.

Had your severity been less on that fatal night of our dispute, all the consequences that followed might have been prevented. I now deplore the weakness which kept me from uttering the real motive of my refusal to marry my cousin. I was, even then, secretly engaged to another. You sent me from your presence without affording me a moment for confession. The step I afterwards took was not premeditated. Heaven is my witness that I had resolved to part with him of whom I have spoken. But it was otherwise ordained. What prayers I resisted you will not believe when I add that I resisted them in vain. Read on, mother! Do not, in anger, destroy this witness to the truth! I am a wedded wife! Lawfully, honestly wedded! It is for this I ask your forgiveness: I ask it also for those who were about me, but who could not prevent the act, for it was accomplished without their knowledge. Its subsequent concealment arose from the hope that it might remain a secret till your angry feeling had undergone a change. That hope was extinguished yesterday. For the sake of my own fair fame, for the sake of my unborn child, for the sake of my absent husband, I break the silence I should else have kept. Mother! mother! you will not turn away from your sorrowing Edith!

"One word more: this revelation would be incomplete if I left you in ignorance of my husband's name. It is Walter Cobham, a lieutenant in the Rifle Brigade, now in Canada: he is not unknown to you. He has only his profession to depend upon, but he is by *birth* and *education* a *gentleman*.  
"E. C."

\* \* \* \* \*

For ten days after this letter was sent Edith remained a prey to the most torturing suspense; no answer came from Mrs. Scrope, though even at that date, when the post was so much less rapid, there had been ample time for communicating twice over. On the eleventh morning, however, while Edith was at a window which commanded a very long avenue that led up to the Hall, she perceived a carriage approaching as fast as the horses could gallop. At once she guessed whom it brought, and again the instinctive terror returned, but with a great effort she overcame it, and

steadily awaited the arrival of her mother. Mrs. Scrope was alone in the carriage, but two other persons, a man and a woman—strangers to Edith—sat outside, behind. The man was on foot to open the carriage directly it stopped, and Mrs. Scrope swiftly descended; so swiftly, that in what seemed to Edith the same moment of time, she heard her voice in the hall below.

"Which is my daughter's room?" she asked, and a gesture rather than speech must have replied, for her words had barely reached Edith's ear when her chamber-door was violently thrown open, and her mother stood before her. An open letter was in her hand.

"Wretched girl!" she exclaimed, "is this a lie and a lure, or have you really dared to degrade yourself to the depths of infamy avowed in this precious scrawl?"

"Mother!" replied Edith, endeavouring to be calm, "infamy is a stranger to my name no less than to yours. Every syllable of that letter is true!"

"Enough!" said Mrs. Scrope, trembling with passion; "my course, then, is clear."

She turned towards the door, which was still open.

"Yates!" she called, "come here, with your wife!"

The man and woman whom Edith had noticed made their appearance immediately. Hard-featured, and of sullen aspect, the man square-built, the woman gaunt and strong, they might have passed for brother and sister.

"This," said Mrs. Scrope, pointing to her daughter—"this is the unfortunate person of whom you will have charge. She needs all your care. She is as cunning as she is violent."

"Who are these people?" cried Edith, rushing towards her mother.

Mrs. Scrope grasped her daughter's arm, and, leaning forward, hissed in her ear:

"YOUR KEEPERS!"

"My God!" exclaimed Edith, and fell senseless on the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five months went by—dark, cheerless, miserable. How Edith escaped the madness imputed to her is one of the

inscrutabilities of human existence. Yates and his wife were skilled attendants, who knew how to better their instructions; their moral power was great, and so was their physical strength: each of these qualities was used in turn, and Edith became in their hands all that they chose to make her—except an absolute lunatic. Walter's letter was unaccountably lost: somebody must have taken it from her bosom! But Mrs. Yates had given her an admirable substitute—a newspaper. What is that paragraph which Edith has read till her eyes have become tearless—from which she rarely turns them?

"Total wreck of the transport *Fortune*, off the coast of Newfoundland—loss of a hundred and seventy officers and men of the Rifle Brigade."

Whether lost amid the besetting ice, or starved to death in the barren woods, the account did not say; but amongst the names of those who perished in the wreck was that of Lieutenant Walter Cobham!

\* \* \* \* \*

Midsummer had come, with all its leafy beauty, with all its joyous sunshine.

Mrs. Scrope was again on a solitary visit to Scargill Hall. She stood now, on the Baptist's night, beside her daughter's bed, watching eagerly. A low sigh might have been heard, and then—but not till then—a voice which said:

*"Take away that dead child!"*

The sigh was repeated, but so faintly, that she who listened for it was obliged to lay her face close to the sufferer's pillow.

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## CHAPTER IX.

HOW MONSIEUR PERROTIN TAUGHT FRENCH IN ENGLAND.

TEN years have gone by since Monsieur Perrotin landed at Portsmouth, and he is still in England, "making his fortune." He has worked hard enough, during those twelve years, to have made a fortune five times over, but as the



race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, so neither is wealth the necessary concomitant of labour.

Monsieur Perrotin, however, sees fortune from his own point of view, and finds a competence in what most of us would think the next kin to starvation. A little while longer, he says, and he shall be able to return to France and "enjoy of his rentes;" by which phrase you must not suppose that he is in possession of houses and lands, but simply that he has managed, year by year, to put by a modicum, which he periodically invests in the French Five per Cents.

What he has gone through to accomplish this, nobody knows but himself.

How early he rises, how far he walks, how little he cares to eat or drink—all this he tells without reserve, because such things are good for his health, and can safely be represented as matters of choice. But the hard crust that suffices for hunger, the saved sixpence that rewards fatigue, the secret shift that keeps up appearances, are never mentioned to any. Perhaps people call him miser—perhaps he knows what they say: it makes no difference to Monsieur Perrotin—his goodwill to the world remains unchanged.

When Mrs. Scrope discovered that the fact of Edith's marriage was known to Monsieur Perrotin, she summoned him before her, and after harshly upbraiding him for conniving against the honour of her family, cast him adrift at once. The wholesome dread of her power with which she had inspired the poor teacher of languages was, she felt assured, security enough against any indiscreet revelation on his part; wherever he starved was all the same to Mrs. Scrope; but without an occupation, or the chance—as she imagined—of obtaining it unsupported by her, nothing was left for him but to return to France.

Conscious of having in some degree merited her reproaches, and scared by the authority of one so rich and so absolute as Mrs. Scrope, with a sigh and a shrug—the resources of his nation—the Frenchman submitted to his fate, and turned away from her door to seek a world elsewhere. That world was not, as she had hoped, to be sought in France—at all events, for the present. Monsieur Perrotin had cast his lot in England, and though timorous to an extent that might pass with many for total want of courage,

his *amour propre* would not allow him to forego his original design. Sensitive and easily depressed, he was apt to give way to accidental ill; but this yielding nature was elastic, and his buoyancy returned almost as quickly as it disappeared, so that he was generally ready for every new phase of circumstances.

To be utterly friendless in a foreign country is, however, a state of affairs which the most adventurous can scarcely bring themselves to look upon with equanimity, and Monsieur Perrotin may be pardoned if the future, as he surveyed it, did not appear all *couleur de rose*. Walter Cobham, the only person whom he could call a friend, was gone; Edith, whom he deeply revered, was in no position to render him assistance; and the kind-hearted Rachel, for whom he had formed a real attachment, which she returned, was shut out from him as completely as if she had never existed. It is true that, with respect to money, he was better off than on his arrival in England, for he had spent very little of the sum which Mrs. Scrope gave him; but, after his summary dismissal, that gift had become a burden. His programme, then, was "Work," but the question was, where to find it?

In choosing a lodging, when first he came to town, Monsieur Perrotin had been assisted by a good-natured waiter at the hotel where he originally put up, and it now occurred to him that the same individual might have it in his power to recommend him as a teacher of languages. He accordingly went to the White Bear and asked for Mr. Williamms—by which emphatic mode of pronunciation he designated his friend, who simply answered—and very often answered—to the name of "William."

"Well, musseer," said he of the napkin, after a little consideration, "I really don't know of anybody at this moment. You see, the people I wait on are mostly folks as comes and goes, one may say almost without my seeing of them. Sometimes it's only a bed and a glass of brandy-and-water, and off the first thing in the morning; sometimes it's a chop or a steak, or a basin of gravy or mock-turtle; and that's done with pretty nigh afore you can look round you; if it's dinners, why I'm worked off my legs a goin' from one box to another; oysters and stout's the same; and when they stays in the house for more than a day at a time,

it's always to see their lawyers and get through their own businesses; so I leave to you to fancy, musseer, what time there is for me to arst any of 'em if they wants to learn French. But," continued William, noticing the blank look of Monsieur Perrotin—who was ready to give up the venture as soon as he had proposed it—"I'll tell you what I'll do, if it's agreeable. I can generally manage an outing of half an hour or so, of an evening, between the last as goes to the play and the first as comes in to marrow-bones and briled kidneys—and if you wouldn't mind condescending, I've long had a wish—that's to say a desire—to—to *parleyvoo* a little myself—it's useful with the number of forriners as drops in here—if, as I was observin' of, you didn't think it a be-meanin' of you, I should be extremely happy to take a few lessons—say a dozen or so till I was pretty perfect—and I'd pay for 'em down!"

It was something more than the volubility with which this proposition was made that took away Monsieur Perrotin's breath and prevented him from making an immediate reply. He fixed his eyes on the waiter's honest face and squeezed his hand. At last he said: "You are a good fellow, Williamms—but I tell you some thing. Nevare I teach you for money! Comm to me when you like. Always I am at your dispose. But money: not so!"

"Oh, that's all nons'nse," said William. "I can afford it—pon my word, I can. Do you know, musseer, I shouldn't take no pleasure in learning of the language if I didn't pay for it. It would seem to me, somehow, as if I stole it. I couldn't get it down—nor bring it up again, neither. Now, when shall I have the first lesson? This evening? I long to begin."

It was of no use offering to resist any further, and William of the White Bear, Piccadilly, became Monsieur Perrotin's first pupil.

Nor was it by any means an unprofitable arrangement, for though the teacher of languages fixed his remuneration at an excessively low figure, the fact of his having William for a pupil proved a better advertisement than if the *Times* had opened its columns free to Monsieur Perrotin.

It might be true enough that the frequenters of the White Bear were, generally speaking, more intent on "re-

plenishing the void" in their stomachs than in their heads; but when they heard the glib waiter interlarding his vernacular with scraps of French, and asked him where that came from; and when William burst forth—as he never failed to do—into a panegyric on his instructor, vowing that he had learnt it all in—as it were—the laying of a tablecloth—Monsieur Perrotin's name went up in the market, and the evening knocks for admission to his class increased prodigiously, and he soon got, not only all the custom of the White Bear, but a good deal besides that never went near it.

Amongst the latter was a gentleman who lived at Richmond, with a numerous family, for whom he was desirous of finding a casual French preceptor. On the recommendation of a friend, who had been indoctrinated in Piccadilly, he saw Monsieur Perrotin, was pleased with him, and suggested that the place where he lived should come within the field of his daily operations. This beginning turned out so well, that from an occasional visit it grew to be a permanent settlement, and with a very fair share of the Richmond teaching, Monsieur Perrotin established himself in Kew Foot-lane, with the word "Professor" before his name on a large broad plate.

It was a great thing to have achieved a position which promised independence, but was Monsieur Perrotin happy? Which of us have not somebody or something to regret the loss of? The blank in Monsieur's Perrotin's existence was the loss of Rachel Loring. During the first few months of her residence with Edith at Scargill Hall, he had heard from her several times, but suddenly there came—not merely an interruption, but a total cessation of correspondence. In an indirect manner Monsieur Perrotin had made inquiries at Mrs. Scrope's house in town, but no information respecting Rachel could be elicited; London footmen are much too magnificent to include country servants in their retentive memories. Back to his books, then, returned Monsieur Perrotin, and hushed, if he could not altogether subdue, the recollections of the past.

But chance very often helps us more than our own intentions.

The beech-walk just within the gate of Richmond Park

was a favourite haunt of Monsieur Perrotin, and there, seated on the turf, with his back against a tree, he often spent an hour, trying to fancy that the shining river of which he caught an occasional glimpse was his own native Loire.

One bright day in October, as he sat meditating on many a thing that had happened years before, a footstep drew near which, if the crackling beech-nuts had not spoken, might have gone past without notice, but at their complaining voice Monsieur Perrotin raised his eyes, and, to his infinite wonder, beheld a face which, though changed a little since last he saw it, he remembered only too well. It was the face of Rachel Loring. The recognition was mutual. Monsieur Perrotin rose hastily, with outstretched hands:

"Mon Dieu, mademoiselle! it is, then, you I see at last!"

"Gracious, Musseer Perrytin, whoever would have thought it!" was the equally astonished reply.

The teacher of languages led Rachel to a seat, and took his place beside her. She had a long story to tell. It may be given in her own words.

"Yes, musseer, you may well say so—it's not to be denied. Unhappy is the life I've led ever since the day when mistress came down to the Hall and put Miss Edith in confinement. Oh, you don't know what mistress is! It's more than anybody can tell, let them try ever so! I'm almost afraid, even out here, to name her name. My father, musseer, was one of her own tenants, and so was his father before him, and being took into the family when I was quite a girl, to attend upon the young ladies, I've all my life stood in fear of her, so it's not to be wondered at. *You'd* be afraid too, if you'd seen and heard what I have! She has such a way when she threatens you, it comes over you so awful like, that obey you must, and glad you are to say or do anything she orders."

Monsieur Perrotin gave one of the national shrugs in acknowledgment of the fidelity of Rachel's portraiture.

"Well, musseer, it won't surprise you, then, when I say that I took a oath never to reveal a certain something which you and me knows of, and another certain something which you've never heard about, but which I won't say that you mayn't give a guess at without my telling. Mistress laid

hands at once on every paper she could find; *his* letters, and the newspaper that had the account of his death, and the copy of the marriage register; there wasn't a thing that reminded Miss Edith of poor Mr. Walter that she didn't get possession of. But the worst of all was when the baby was born—mind, I don't say whose. Poor thing! She was made to suppose it died, and after that she became anything that mistress chose to make her. She no more resisted than a lamb—she hadn't the spirit to! How she used to sit silent for hours and hours, with now and then a tear dropping slowly down! It made my heart bleed to see her."

Monsieur Perrotin turned away his head and furtively wiped his own eyes.

"Yes, musseer, as any one must that *had* a heart! I should mention that as soon as Miss Edith got well enough in body to move, mistress took her to the seaside, leaving me *and another* behind with Mrs. Walker—that's she that was the housekeeper at Scargill; them two that was brought down—I won't say what *they* were—she sent back to the place they came from, well paid, you may be sure, for all they did by her orders. It was a long, long while before I ever saw Miss Edith again, and a good many things happened in the mean while. First there was Miss Agatha's marriage with Sir James Tunstall, and then Miss Mary was born, and after that Master James, who only lived three weeks, and they've never had another child since, much as they want one, which my lady and mistress both desires a boy. Then Lord Deepdale, Miss Edith's own cousin (it was all along of him that dreadful business began), he came home, and more in love with Miss Edith, I've been told, he couldn't have been; and at last, what with his begging and praying, what with her being more like a wax doll in mistress's hands than a person that could think and do for herself, she consented to have him. When they married they went abroad, and there they've mostly lived ever since, going to this place and that, on account of her health, but no family, Musseer Perrytin: that's been denied them, and if you agree with me you'll say it's a judgment on mistress, only the innocent suffers as well as the guilty. You ask me what I was doing all this while, and if—— Yes, musseer, many and many's the time I've thought about you, though mistress told me

you had gone back to France and was settled there. It would have been a dreary life at Scargill with Mrs. Walker—she was quite one of mistress's own sort—if I hadn't had a little playmate, and you may suppose I wanted one, for Mrs. Walker never left me, and outside the park paling I never went for six long years. When Mrs. Walker died, mistress made up her mind for a change, and came to the Hall—as she often had done after Miss Edith left, and—not to keep you too long, musseer—the boy was took to a clergyman's down there, and I was parted from him."

Here Rachel could not restrain her tears, but, covering her face, sobbed audibly.

"Nevare mine, my dear!" said Monsieur Perrotin, pressing her hand.

"It *is* foolish," she resumed, "to take on so about what's not one's own, but he was just the same to me as if he *had* been mine! That's three years ago, Musseer Perrytin, and I feel it only as if it was yesterday. That same night we set out for London, and a few months after mistress took me to Italy with her. I did hope to have seen something of you as we passed through France, musseer, but it wasn't to be: that was a trial, and so was knowing what I knew and never daring to breathe a word of comfort to Miss Edith—Lady Deepdale, I should say—who was staying with my lord at Nice, before they went on to Malta, where they now are. I needn't name all the places we were at, but at Rome we lived in the same palace as Sir James and Lady Tunstall; Miss Mary, their little girl, is the sweetest child—except one poor thing—that ever was seen! It's only a month since mistress came back; we've come down to the hotel here on the hill for a few days, and what mistress is going to do next—with her restlessness—is a good deal more, Musseer Perrytin, than I'm able to tell you."

What Rachel Loring was going to do next, was, however, the question. Time had wrought no change in Monsieur Perrotin's feelings for Rachel, and hers had been half avowed. The interview was long, and it ended in a promise on her part to marry the teacher of languages. Mrs. Scrope had given her leave to go and see her family in Lincolnshire. She would find an excuse for not returning. To a continental life Rachel was now familiarised, and

she readily agreed to accompany Monsieur Perrotin to his own country.

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## CHAPTER X.

### A HOME.

ABOUT five or six miles from Scargill Hall, in the small village of Moorside, in the heart of the West Gill, there lived a clergyman of the Established Church, who super-added to his clerical duties the occupation of an extensive farmer.

The name of this clergyman was Binks, and, besides the household and farm servants, his establishment consisted of a widowed daughter, a married son, a grandson of thirteen, and a boy some four years younger, who was no relation to the rest. He had himself nearly reached his seventieth year; but age, though it had grizzled and somewhat thinned his hair, had wrought little change in his personal appearance since he was forty, when he was counted one of the strongest men in the North Riding. Accident had made him a clergyman, but he seemed fitter to have been a trooper, and—if religion had had any part in him—he might, in Cromwell's time, have shone conspicuously among the "Ironsides." Stephen, his son, who for special reasons lived chiefly in his father's house, was a rough, illiterate man, headstrong, passionate, and violent. Mrs. Chaytor, the widowed daughter, resembled her brother in nothing but his temper; in form she was slight, in health feeble, in disposition tender and compassionate, and from her language and manner no one would have thought she had kept her father's house nearly all her life; but her intellect was quick, and she had profited by early opportunities. The grandson, Oliver, was the eldest-born of Stephen Binks—a mean, malicious, creeping coward. There remains only to speak of the relationless boy. He was called "Wat," with no further addition, and if he had a surname, nobody ever mentioned it. How he belonged to the family of Mr. Binks happened in this wise.



About six years before the boy became an inmate at Moorside, a rumour spread of some misadventure that had befallen a great family in that part of the Riding, but the story, whatever it was, died away with the absence of the principal persons concerned. If Tibbie Walker, the old housekeeper at Scargill Hall, had chosen to say all she knew on the subject, the scandal might have endured longer, and assumed a more consistent shape; but she was a grim old woman, whom nobody cared to question too often, and the cause for her taciturnity while she lived was, no doubt, a good one. The rumour, then, ceased to circulate, till at last it was, as we have said, wellnigh forgotten, when a circumstance occurred which revived it in the minds of a few.

At a late hour one fine summer's evening, the large, gateless courtyard of Moorside House witnessed the unusual apparition of a well-appointed private carriage, which, however did not seem to be unexpected by the Reverend Mr. Binks, for, contrary to his custom, he was standing at his open door as if on the look-out. What favoured this supposition was the fact that, without waiting for the postilion to dismount, Mr. Binks himself opened the carriage-door, and let out a lady, a little boy, and a female attendant, whom he followed into the common room: his daughter was there, and rose as the party entered.

The stranger lady, after acknowledging Mrs. Chaytor's presence by a haughty bow, looked round the room imperiously, and then said:—

“Have you no more private place than this?”

Mrs. Chaytor answered in the affirmative, and conducted her visitor along a dark, narrow passage, terminating in an apartment that might, for courtesy's sake, be called “the library,” as it was the only room in the house in which there were any books, and these were ranged in the window-settles. Mr. Binks proposed a light, but this was declined by her on whose account it was offered, and the study door closed upon a conference which lasted about twenty minutes, during which the servant and the child remained in the hall. At the expiration of that time the three persons who had been closeted returned, and the stranger lady told her attendant to give the child to Mrs. Chaytor.

"I hope, ma'am, I may bid him good-bye," said a trembling voice.

"Say it and have done!" was the cold, brief answer.

The servant took the boy in her arms and clasped him closely, vainly striving to repress a flood of tears.

The boy cried too. "Rachel, dear," he said, "don't go away—don't leave me alone with ——" he whispered the rest.

"Hush! hush! Watty!" was the subdued reply—"this kind lady will take care of you:" and turning to Mrs. Chaytor, the speaker added, earnestly, "you will, ma'am, I am sure!"

"Come to me, pretty little fellow," said Mrs. Chaytor, holding out her hand; "I will be your mamma now."

But the boy still cried and clung to her who appeared to be his nurse, and it was only with a little gentle violence that he could be removed.

The stranger lady, who had beheld this scene with impatience, now formally saluted Mrs. Chaytor, and moved to the door, where her carriage was waiting, and the Rev. Mr. Binks, with an obsequiousness very foreign to his general habits, attended to wish her a pleasant journey. His civility was barely noticed by the object of it, but if he could have seen the imploring look of her companion, something in his nature might, perhaps, have been stirred in favour of the child that was left behind. Mr. Binks, however, had eyes only for the great personage with whom he had that night entered into a compact most advantageous to himself, and whatever good was in store for the boy must be looked for at other hands than his.

It was fortunate that Mrs. Chaytor had a strong will as well as a feeling heart, or it would have gone much harder with little Wat in the household of which he had so abruptly been made a part. Asserting her claim to him at once, on account of his tender age, she took him under her immediate care, and, as well as her health permitted, gave him all the nurture of which she was capable. He was docile and clever, and benefited, to its full extent, by his desultory education. The elder Mr. Binks, a sordid man, who cared for nothing but gain, took little heed of what was done with the boy while he was still so young, but Stephen Binks very

soon became jealous of the interest which his sister manifested—to the detriment, as he conceived, of his own son, a lout too stupid and obstinate to profit by any teaching—and in proportion to her affection grew his dislike. He never by any chance gave Wat a kind word, but sneered at and slighted him whenever he had an opportunity, and example was scarcely necessary to make Oliver Binks—or Loll, as he was commonly called—imitate his father. What was this somebody's by-blow, Stephen Binks wished to know, that he should be more looked after than an honest man's lawful child? If his sister Chaytor wanted to show off her fine feelings, there were her own blood relations, who had a right to them, and not a mongrel bastard smuggled into the house God only knew how! If the cub lived long enough, however, and was ever able to carry a pitchfork, he'd work him, would Stephen Binks, and that he swore with many a boisterous oath. Of this threat little Wat was not suffered to remain in ignorance, for it was Loll's chiefest pleasure, when the boys were alone together, to dwell on it with dull malignity; and if the fellow had dared, he would have given his young companion a foretaste of the threatened violence, but a certain steady resolution in the face of little Wat warned Loll that any attempt of that sort had better be left alone.

In this manner, caressed on one side and an object of envy and hatred on the other, the days went by till Edith's child—whose death Mrs. Scrope had alleged, to serve her ulterior purpose—had reached his ninth year. An event then occurred which materially influenced his destiny.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FIRST TASTE OF SORROW.

THE day was breaking, one drizzly autumn morning, when Wat, whose slumbers were never heavy, was awakened by the noise of a footfall in the room where he slept, and presently a dark figure stood between him and such light

as, at that hour, struggled through the dim, uncurtained window-panes. He knew it was morning, and therefore none of the fear beset him which often overcomes the most courageous in the solemn darkness of night, but he sat up, rather anxiously, in bed, as the unwonted visitor drew near.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"It's nobbut me," returned a voice which Wat immediately recognized.

"Well, what do you want, Loll?" he demanded.

"You must get up. You're to go to coals!"

"Who says so?" inquired Wat.

"Never you mind who says so," retorted the other, "you get up."

"Mrs. Chaytor said last night she wanted me after breakfast in the library, to help her to sort some books."

"The libery! you'll be far enough off by the time she wants you. You're to go to coals. Father says so. Come, get up!" And as he spoke, Loll shook the young boy roughly.

Unusual though the summons, and unaccustomed as he was to be so abruptly ordered, the name of Loll's father was a word of fear, and any mandate of his must not be lightly disobeyed. Wat rose, therefore, and followed his awakener. Descending to the courtyard, he saw the men busily harnessing the horses to the waggon, and Stephen Binks, with a coarse red worsted comforter round his bull-neck, standing by superintending, and balancing a heavy cart-whip over his shoulder. He turned round sharply as the boys drew near, and Wat saw by his countenance, even in that imperfect light, that it would have been dangerous to have shown any symptoms of want of alacrity.

"Coom, lads!" said Stephen, gruffly, "what's mad' ye loiter? Joomp into t' waggon!"

Wat silently did as he was bid, and under these inauspicious circumstances the journey began.

The place whither they were bound was a small town near the county border. It was distant about twenty miles, and the time spent in getting there, at the slow pace at which the team went, afforded Wat plenty of leisure for reflection. But it was in vain that he tried to account for

his present employment; nothing had ever been said to him on the subject, and unless it were connected with an occurrence of the night before, which grated unpleasantly on his memory, he felt quite at a loss for the cause. As his perceptions became more distinct, a vague sense of fear arose that he was in some way or other concerned in a violent quarrel which had taken place in the house after he had gone to bed. He remembered to have heard voices high in contention—sometimes shrill, then loud, then deep; occasionally the sounds would subside into low murmuring, and break forth again with renewed fury, and more than once he thought he heard his own name mentioned; but he had tried to shut his ears against the noise, for he knew by experience that such quarrels boded good to none, and covering himself under the clothes, he had fallen asleep before the storm lulled.

Fear is often a faithful interpreter, and in coming to the conclusion that he was associated with the wordy strife of the previous night, the boy was not wrong.

Stephen Binks, in a half-drunken mood, which always made him quarrelsome, had begun by sneering at his sister's favourite, vowing that Wat was good for nothing but to be tied to her apron-string, that he should like to take him in hand, and—as the excitement increased—that before long he would do so, whether his sister liked it or not. Mrs. Chaytor replied angrily; Stephen retorted with brutality; and from this beginning a personal quarrel arose, in which, as is usually the case in such matters, the original cause of dissension was soon lost sight of. Stephen ripped up grievances, real or imaginary, which had slumbered from infancy, and Mrs. Chaytor poured on his head the accumulated wrath of years, by no means forgetting to cast into his teeth the shame he had brought on his family and himself by his degrading marriage. It ended in a fit of hysterics on her part, and a sworn declaration on his, that, "whether she lived or died, he'd have that whelp out to coals t'morn!"

We have seen how he kept his word.

Dark and sullen as the day appeared, it was not, to Wat's thinking, half so gloomy as the black, scowling expression of the countenance of Stephen Binks. His victim was in

his power, but he could not overmaster a sense of wrong committed, which weighed upon his mind in spite of all his efforts to shake it off. He tried to forget the provocation he had given, and irritated himself anew by recalling the contemptuous and bitter words which his sister had used towards him, and those which his galled vanity considered insults to his wife. By this process he contrived to set himself right with his own conscience, but it was at the expense of every one around him.

"It's all along o' thee, thou curst mongrel!" he muttered, as he eyed poor Wat, who was sheltering himself from the rain beneath some empty sacks in the corner of the waggon; "but I'se pay thee for 't, I reckon. Come out o' that, thou Wat!" he bawled; "dost hear? Art made o' sugar or saut, that thou's afeard o' t' wet? Lope then!"

He accompanied these words with a heavy stroke of his whip, which caught Wat on the back, and made him quiver with pain, but he set his teeth firmly, and shed no tears. He did not, however, wait for a repetition of the blow, but got down as quickly as he could, his descent into the road being accelerated by the rough hand of Stephen Binks, who seized his collar and gave him a cuff as he fell, and a kick, when on the ground, to make him get up again. The brute then strode to the front, and was soon involved in a snarling dialogue with one of the men belonging to the team, while Wat followed the waggon on foot, and the hulk, Loll, who had been grinning at the punishment just inflicted, made himself comfortable under the coal-sacks, and, taking out a huge piece of bread and some cold meat, prepared in solitary gluttony for his breakfast. Poor Wat had nothing to eat, nor did any one appear to give a thought as to whether he had broken his fast or not, so he trudged on in the mud, his mind too much absorbed in painful thoughts to heed this neglect, or to notice his covetous companion.

In this order the party advanced till they reached a village about half way, where a short halt was made on account of the horses, and the men took a hasty meal, while Wat remained outside, sitting on one of the shafts of the waggon. Before mid-day they reached the pits, and here, for about four hours they worked incessantly loading the coals, Wat toiling till he was ready to sink with fatigue and exhaustion. The

day before he was a cheerful, smiling boy, neatly dressed, and with the hue of health on his comely face; as he stood at the mouth of the coal-pit, no one could have recognized him for the same child. His clothes were soaked with wet and splashed with mud, the collier's labour had grimed his face and blackened his hands, and the tears which, in spite of his efforts, would fall, had marked pale furrows on his hollow cheeks.

Ah! if at that moment Edith had seen her boy, that might have been

Her life, her joy, her food, her all-the-world,

she would not have wearied Heaven with prayers for the continuance of his life, but rather have blessed the hour in which her mother's wicked words had come to be true.

They took their way home again, the same cheerless weather still prevailing, but Wat was no longer able to walk, and—not out of compassion, but from the fear of leaving him behind and having to account for him—Stephen Binks suffered the boy to mount the waggon, where, cold and miserable, with none to console him, and having eaten nothing the livelong day save a crust which one of the men thrust into his hand while they were baiting, he sat silently wrapped up in grief, and wondering whether Mrs. Chaytor, like all the rest of the world, had suddenly turned against him.

Night had fallen when the party returned to Moorside, and, as it was too late to unload the waggon, the horses were taken out, the men went with them to the stable, and Stephen Binks, followed by Loll, entered the house, leaving Wat, who was half dead with cold, hunger, and fatigue, to get down from the height where he had been perched as best he might.

A scene awaited Stephen Binks, which, in spite of his hardihood and his knowledge of his sister's character, he was little prepared for; though, as far as drink could fortify resolution, he had taken enough on the road, scarcely a single alehouse having been passed unvisited.

When Mrs. Chaytor rose, at a late hour that day, after passing a perfectly wretched night, her first inquiry was for little Wat. None of the indoor servants had seen him,

and, though they suspected what had happened, they kept on the safe side by professing ignorance of his movements; and it was not till all about the place had been questioned, that Rafe, the cowboy, admitted that he had seen Wat in the waggon.

Mrs. Chaytor's worst fear was confirmed, and she brooded over it all day—not nursing her wrath to keep it warm, but striving rather to keep down the passion which was climbing to her heart.

Her recent illness had made her very weak, and it was only by a great effort that she was able to keep her place on the settee, where—with her back resting against a pillow, which kept her figure in an upright posture—she sat, her large black hollow eyes steadfastly fixed on the door opposite, and her wan, meagre hands resting without motion on her knees. She was so “still and pale,” that it needed no poetical suggestion to liken her to a sculptured image rather than to a breathing woman.

She had watched long and patiently alone, the female servants being at their spinning in an outer kitchen, when a wellknown sound aroused her: it was the harsh voice of her brother, as he entered the court-yard with the waggon. She started, clenched her hands convulsively, and moved her lips for an instant, but without giving utterance to a word. This involuntary emotion past, she resumed her former calm attitude. In a few minutes the door was thrown open, and Stephen Binks and his hopeful son, Loll, entered the room.

He was evidently taken by surprise, for, knowing the state in which he had left his sister the night before, aware of the severe nature of her attacks, and relying on the lateness of the hour, he had fully expected to find no one up, except, perhaps, his father, who had been absent from home but might have returned; and for a meeting with him he was fully prepared, knowing that little would be said on account of exceeding his authority in so small a matter as the treatment of a boy whom Mr. Matthew Binks had reasons of his own for not caring to see nurtured too tenderly.

But here was no indifferent father to silence with a few easily-spoken words; on the contrary, he had to encounter



a quick-witted, passionate woman, having authority over him no less by being several years his senior, than by the comparative sharpness of her intellect; she had been grossly outraged by him when last he saw her, and—in addition—she had now the wrongs of helpless childhood to avenge. He had no resource but bravado.

"What, thou here!" he said; "I thowt thee'd been in bed, after all thy tantrums last night."

"Stephen Binks," replied his sister, in a smothered voice, and without rising from the settee, "had I sat here till midnight—ay, till to-morrow midnight—I would not have quitted this room before I saw you enter it."

"What then?" he answered. "What dost thou want wi' me, now I am here? I thowt we'd had pretty nigh enough of each other's company!"

"Your company was the last thing I wished for," retorted Mrs. Chaytor, with a bitterness of expression which she did not attempt to conceal. "I desire to know what you have been doing with little Wat!"

"He's been to coals," said Stephen, doggedly, foreseeing the storm that was brewing.

"To coals!" she exclaimed. "And are you not ashamed to own that you have taken a boy like that, unused to work of any kind, to go a distance of more than forty miles, on a day like this, with such work to do as I know you give? To take a poor delicate child out of his warm bed at daylight, and slave him about the country till nightfall! You are a greater brute, Stephen Binks, than even I ever gave you credit for being!"

"Hang the boy!" returned her brother; "thou couldn't mak' more noise about him if he had been thine own; though that," he added, with a sneer, "is a chance thou never'st had. Delicate, is he? The more reason, then, for making him hardy, like my Loll."

"Where is he?" asked Mrs. Chaytor, taking no notice of his brutal allusion to her feeble health.

"Curse me if I know or car'," answered Stephen; "thou'lt find him on top of t' coals if thou gangs and looks—if he han't had t' luck to brack his neck in getting doon. Coom! I want my supper, and so does Loll—and what's more, we don't mean to wait for 't."

"Not a bit or sup, Stephen Binks, shall you have from me till I see that boy. You, Loll, take that lantern! Go across the yard and at your peril, sir, come back without him!"

The lubber, trembling at her voice, lifted the lantern and left the room, while his father surlily threw himself into a chair, and drummed on the floor with his foot.

There was a pause, which was broken by the reappearance of Loll, holding by the arm—for he could hardly stand—a miserable, shivering creature, drenched with rain, covered with dirt from head to foot, and altogether in so sorry a plight, that, for some moments, Mrs. Chaytor could not believe it was he whom she had sent for.

"Gracious God!" she shrieked, rather than cried, as soon as recognition came, "is it possible? Have you had the heart—have you had the brutality—have you been inhuman enough to act in so barbarous a manner? Come, Wat—come to my breast—here—here—come to these arms that shall protect you as long as I breathe the breath of life!"

The boy, who had stood aghast on entering, not knowing how to interpret her passion, now flew towards her. Regardless of the dirt which disfigured him, intent on nothing but how to cherish and comfort one so forlorn, she pressed him again and again to her bosom, kissed his damp forehead, chafed his cold hands, drew him closer and closer to the fire, summoned all the servants—some to bring water, some dry clothes, some food—nor did she cease from her cares till warmth was renewed in his limbs, a faint colour was restored to his cheeks, and he had swallowed some hot drink which she forced upon him.

There needed no prolonged narrative to tell the tale of that day's misery! It was written in every lineament of the boy's features, and was better described by his torn and sullied garments than by all the words he could have uttered.

Mrs. Chaytor could not trust herself to look at her brother, who still sat sullenly beating the devil's tattoo on the floor.

At last he started up, and demanded with an oath what he was to have for his supper?

This was the signal for the bursting forth of that torrent which had so long been pent up, and with a vehemence that was fearful to behold in one so frail of form and so attenuated by sickness, Mrs. Chaytor opened the floodgates of her passion.

What she said in the whirlwind of her fury she never paused to consider, neither did her brother wait to measure its effect, but summoning up every coarse invective that lay hidden in the foul depths of his soul, he heaped them upon her with a violence fully equal to her own.

But he did not stop there, for, rage having now the mastery over him, he strode forward to wreak personal vengeance—not, indeed, on his sister—but on the unoffending boy, the innocent cause of this unhappy quarrel.

In vain, however, he strove to seize him. Mrs. Chaytor threw herself before her charge, and with outstretched arms kept her brother for a time at bay.

Maddened at length by this opposition, and uttering desperate threats, Stephen Binks grasped her in his strong embrace.

She writhed—she struggled—she defied his utmost strength—and then, with a violent effort, cast herself loose, and once more menaced with her clenched hands.

But it was only for a moment.

She had exhausted every energy that nature gave, and suddenly she fell, a stream of blood gushing from her mouth.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### HELP.

IN the scene of excitement just described, the fatal blow was struck. The hemorrhage was of so fearful a kind that it wrought consternation even in the callous breast of Stephen Binks, whose remorse became now as great as his rage had been fierce. Mrs. Chaytor was carried to bed, and the best medical assistance was sent for, but when the doctor came he at once declared the case hopeless. The

utmost quiet was all he could recommend in the hope of prolonging his patient's existence, and during the few days she lingered, little Wat, at his own request, was constantly by her bedside. She died at last, without a struggle, the poor boy being the only witness of her dissolution.

The Reverend Mr. Binks bore the loss of his daughter with a philosophy which he had, on many occasions, failed to exhibit when it had been his lot to hear of a cow dying suddenly or of a sheep having been cast. He grumbled sorely at the expense of the funeral, and what sorrow he felt took the shape of increased ill-humour, of which everybody about him came in for a share.

Stephen Binks was, at first, loud in his grief, but its violence was soon exhausted, and before a fortnight had passed his sister was clean forgotten; so far, at least, as regard for her memory went; for his wife—"Black Nan," as she was called, from her swarthy complexion—now installed in the place of Mrs. Chaytor, was for ever harping on her faults, and did so unchecked by him.

Little Wat was the only real mourner, but he soon discovered that he must mourn in silence, and the memory of his benefactress remained, therefore, a thing for him to cherish, as he cherished that of his nurse Rachel.

If the ill-will of Stephen Binks towards him in some degree abated—the jealousy which had prompted it being at rest in his sister's grave—it was speedily reproduced in another quarter; Black Nan had resentments to gratify which death had not effaced. She was by nature envious, uncharitable, and implacable. From an ugly child she had grown into a still uglier woman, who, in spite of a face toad-speckled rather than freckled, lips like those of an African, hard black eyes with a sinister cast in them, short woolly hair and a bony, shapeless figure, had still the vanity to believe that she was not without pretensions to beauty. Female frailty is generally accompanied by good looks, and perhaps it was because her virtue had not been beyond suspicion, when she lived as a servant with Mrs. Chaytor, that she imagined she must needs be the owner of personal charms. Her dead sister-in-law, and former mistress, had been handsome, a sufficient reason with Black Nan for envy; but that passion deepened into

hatred when she found, as she very soon did, what slight estimation her character was held in by Mrs. Chaytor, who, to perfect purity of conduct, added a large share of family pride, and looked upon her brother's marriage as an utter degradation. There was cause enough, then, why the wife of Stephen Binks should hate her sister-in-law in her lifetime; and the narrowness of her soul, and her innate vindictiveness, combined to perpetuate her rancour after death. Mrs. Chaytor was gone, but the boy she had loved remained, and to him was transferred all the enmity of Black Nan. And with a heavy hand she dealt it out, the malicious cub, her son, eagerly enforcing her tyranny. While Mrs. Chaytor lived, Wat's occupation had been light, but now there was no kind of work from which Black Nan exempted him, whether he had strength to perform it or not. The habits of his task-mistress were, moreover, as stingy as her nature was cruel, and hunger was not the least amongst the pains which Edith's child endured.

Winter was fast approaching; it comes early enough in the northern wolds, and it happened on one cold, dreary November day, that Black Nan having bread to make, found she was short of meal. Some corn had been sent to be ground a day or two before, but it was still at the mill, and, after storming for an hour at all the servants, Black Nan resolved to send for it. Her fittest messenger would have been Loll, but while the lazy fellow sat burning his shins before the fire, his mother fixed upon Wat, as he came in from the wood-stack with a bundle of fuel for the oven, and told him to go.

"Thou Wat!" she said, "tak' thy hat and gang to t' miller's at Lune Beck and bring a bag o' meal, as mickle as thou canst carry: and see thou be'st quick, or thou'lt smart for 't."

It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and dinner was getting ready; but scanty as his portion might be, there was no dinner for Wat till he returned. The distance was several miles, and he could hardly get back much before dark; but to object to go would only have made matters worse: he would have been beaten and sent all the same. The errand had, too, its pleasant side: he should be nearly a whole day out of the clutches of Loll and Black Nan.

There were two ways to Lune Beck, the most direct across the moor, the easiest by the high-road. Being unencumbered as yet, and caring little for the roughness of the path, Wat chose the first, and in less than a couple of hours he reached his destination. The miller had forgotten his promise to grind the corn, so there was some delay before enough meal could be got ready. The miller's wife was a good-natured woman, and turned the interval to Wat's profit by giving him something to eat while he waited, and she would fain have sent the flour by one of her own men, but there was nobody to spare. Against her will, then, she loaded Wat, and with a bushel of meal at his back the little fellow started for Moorside.

"Keep to t' road, lad," she said, after "setting" him a short way; "when thou comes to t' neukin o' t' lonnin' maybe thou'lt meet wi' a cart or summot to pick thee up. I'd like to twist the neck o' that Black Nan for sending thee on sic an errand!"

No such luck befel as the kind woman wished, and when Wat had accomplished half his journey he was obliged to stop and rest. It was at the foot of a steep hill, where the Lune, a moorland stream, after escaping from the miller's back, came brawling down a dark ravine, and crossed the road beneath a bridge of one high, single arch. It was later in the afternoon than Wat had expected, and distant objects were growing indistinct, when he heard the sound of wheels on the road he had left behind. He was glad to think he should perhaps get the lift he wanted, and turned to see what was coming. It was a gig, in which were two persons, a man and a woman, and within a few paces of the bridge the driver, who did not seem to be the very best whip in the world, suddenly pulled up.

"My pretty littel boy," he said, in a foreign accent, "are we rightly going to a place called Moorside?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Wat; "you're quite right so far; but after you get over the hill about a quarter of a mile, there's a cross-road, and you must keep to the left. If you like, I'll show you the turning."

He made an effort and shouldered his bag as he spoke.

"You carry some thing too heavy," said the person who had already spoken; "what you carry?"

"Meal, sir. I've been to the mill. I'm afraid I'm late."

"Where you go, then? Is it so long a way?"

"Three miles and more. I belong to Moorside. I live at the House."

"Your parents live there too?"

"I have no parents. They say I'm nobody's son."

"Try and lift up your bag, my pretty boy; we have room for it here, and for you. Not so, Rachel!"

At this last word Wat raised his head quickly and met the full, eager gaze of the speaker's companion.

"Watty! Watty!" she cried, "it must be you! Oh, my dear, my darling child!"

In the same moment she jumped from the gig and threw her arms round the boy's neck, smothering him with kisses. He knew her too. It was his own nurse Rachel.

"And is this the way," she said, when her first emotion had subsided—"is this the way they treat you, Watty? I thought that lady promised to be kind!"

"She is dead!" returned the boy sobbing—"I can show you her grave in Moorside kirkyard. I saw her put into it."

"Are you often made to carry loads like this?" asked Rachel, unable to get the better of this evidence of ill-usage. "Tell me all they do to you."

The barrier to his speech, so long interposed, was removed at once: with all a child's rapidity of utterance he poured forth the history of his wrongs—unintelligible in its details, but sadly clear in its general character. How Rachel wept—how she hugged him to her heart—how she covered him with her pity! And all the time they both stood in the road, the driver of the gig looking wistfully on.

"Pascal," exclaimed Rachel, while her boy was still speaking, "what is to be done?"

"I tell you, my dear wife," replied Monsieur Perottin—for the awkward driver was no less a personage—"I tell you. You comm to see this pretty boy another time before you go from England. By chance you meet him. Not as you hope and expect, with good, kind people, but in a shocking manner, behaving like the beasts. It should be wicked, quite wicked, Rachel, to let him stay with them. He shall be our own littel shild; nevere again those beasts shall have him. My dear young fellow, you comm with us?"

Rachel turned pale : for an instant the image of Mrs. Scrope hovered before her eyes ; but a glance at the child reassured her.

"You are right, Pascal ;" she said, "come of it what will, we cannot leave him here. You are not afraid, Watty, to go with us ?"

"Rachel ! Rachel ! dear, dear Rachel !" cried the boy as he flung himself into her arms.

When he disengaged himself he danced about the road with glee. "Good-by, Loll ; good-by, Stevy Binks ; good-by, Black Nan ! I wonder when you'll get your meal. Here, help me, Rachel, to throw this into the beck. There !" he cried, as the bag was pushed from the parapet of the bridge and fell heavily into the swift current—"there, Black Nan ; if I've had no dinner, you'll get no breakfast. Now let us be off before they catch us !"

The gig was turned round, Rachel lifted Wat in, and quickly regained her seat. Monsieur Perrotin cracked his whip, and though he faced the hill he had so lately descended, the horse set off at a sharp trot, for he knew he was going back to his stable.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### A CHANGE OF SCENE.

BLACK NAN's ill-humour was not diminished by the delay of her messenger ; but when evening came without his return, she began to be anxious, and, after much grumbling, despatched her hopeful son Loll to Lune Beck for tidings of the absentee. But the miller's wife—who inwardly prayed that Wat might have run away—only said he had been sent back early enough to have reached home soon after dark, if not before it. This was not pleasant news at Moorside, and it brewed a storm in "The House," which lasted late into the night, the loudest and most furious being the Reverend Mr. Binks, who, besides the loss with which his pocket was threatened, had an account to render to a person of whom even he stood in awe.



On the following morning, as soon as it was light, Mr. Binks mounted his big horse Badger, and rode in one direction, Stephen Binks saddled his steed and took another, all the household were afoot, and search was made in every place likely or unlikely to harbour the fugitive—for such they all supposed the boy to be—their tender natures having little sympathy with possible accident. To this last conclusion, however, they were forced to come from the report made by Rafe, the cowboy, who, spying something white in the Lune river a little below the bridge, and clambering down at the risk of his neck, had discovered the bag of meal firmly wedged between some rocks where the river ran swiftest and deepest. Fresh search was made down the stream, and though nothing else was found, the general opinion prevailed that Wat had fallen over the bridge and been drowned. If not, what could have become of him? as, in answer to every inquiry, nothing could be learnt of his having been anywhere seen. The idea that anybody existed who took sufficient interest in the boy to carry him off, never entered into one of their heads; nor was it, indeed, a very probable supposition.

It finally fell to the lot of the Reverend Mr. Binks to break the news of Wat's disappearance to Mrs. Scrope. He would gladly have delayed the task—and made money by his silence—but it so happened that in the very crisis of the affair he received a letter from that lady, asking for certain detailed information respecting the boy. He was thus compelled to tell all he knew, but the answer was not satisfactory to Mrs. Scrope. On receipt of the intelligence she at once went down to Moorside to make personal inquiries. They proved altogether as fruitless as those previously made, and she was obliged to return, full of that disquiet which always attends uncertainty, and her disquiet augmented by her knowledge of the part she had played throughout the whole transaction. That the child should be dead troubled her less than ignorance of his fate, though there were moments when remorse was not wanting to embitter her reflections.

As to the Reverend Mr. Binks, it seemed that the proverb which says that misfortunes never come single was purposely made for him, since nothing prospered at Moorside after the

day that Wat was missed. In the first place, he was thrown from his big horse Badger, and broke his thigh; while still in the surgeon's hands, a fire—the supposed work of an incendiary—consumed all his stacks and barns; Stephen Binks, who drank more than ever, killed a man one day in a tavern brawl, and was sentenced to transportation; Black Nan went gloomily out of her mind, and hung herself behind the scullery door; and Loll, at his grandfather's death, which happened soon after, drifted no one knew where, the farming stock being all sold to satisfy the Reverend Mr. Binks's creditors.

We follow, then, the track of little Wat.

It was no momentary impulse that moved Monsieur Perrotin to take charge of Edith's neglected child. It is true that, in "making his economies," he had never calculated on this sudden addition to his establishment; but when he reflected on the boy's forlorn condition—fatherless in reality and motherless in all but the name—he resolved that nothing should be wanting on his part to supply a father's place, and the depth of his wife's affection for her nursling was security for a mother's care.

In marrying Rachel Loring, Monsieur Perrotin had not taken upon himself a mere encumbrance. She was one of those women whose usefulness is far more valuable than worldly gear, and, moreover, she had saved a little money in Mrs. Scrope's service—enough, as Monsieur Perrotin said, "to mount their house;" for the rest, he trusted—in addition to his own small income—to his capabilities for teaching, which he, somehow, imagined were universal.

Behold Monsieur Perrotin, then, after ten years' expatriation, on his way back to his own country. He must pass one day in London, to give Rachel time to procure a number of things needful for little Wat, who came to her, as we have seen, without scrip or wallet. Monsieur Perrotin stops, for that day, at the well-remembered White Bear, in Piccadilly, of which hotel "Williamms," once the waiter, is now Mr. William Partridge, the landlord—a thriving man, with a comely wife and four pretty children. Mine host is delighted to see his old preceptor again, and compels the new comers to be his guests while they stay, giving them a famous dinner in the parlour behind the bar, over which he presides, striving

to render it more pleasant to Mousieur Perrotin, and secretly desiring to astonish his better-half by rubbing up his French, which had grown a little rusty ; so much so, indeed, that if Monsieur Perrotin had been inclined to be critical, he might have enjoyed a grand field-day : but he is all gaiety and good humour, and merely pays Mr. Williamms off in his own coin, so that between them they realise the idea of having been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps. On the morrow, when he leaves, Monsieur Perrotin cannot part from his hospitable entertainer without exacting from him a promise to bring "Madame Williamms"—he cannot call her anything else—on a visit to France, "one of those days," when Monsieur Perrotin is settled. This promise is equally insisted on by Rachel, and with the best wishes of the White Bear, severally and collectively, the travellers take their departure.

Whither ?

That has been the subject of much careful consideration.

Though legitimacy has long been dead and buried, though "that family"—as Monsieur Perrotin calls the House of Orleans—appear to be as firmly seated as French stability admits of, though the aspect of Paris—save in "the faubourg"—is almost what it was before the last revolution, the teacher of languages cannot bring himself to like the idea of returning to the capital which he so hastily quitted. He would go back to Touraine, but there is nobody there to give him a welcome, and this thought brings to his mind the recollection of the only person in France whom he is lucky enough to call a friend. This person is the Abbé Ramier, a very learned man, one of the head teachers at the college of Rouen, and there Monsieur Perrotin decides to set up his rest.

By such public means of conveyance as the time affords, Monsieur Perrotin, his wife, and little Wat, proceed to Southampton, and ship themselves one night for Havre. The steamer is swifter than the *Jeune Adèle* which brought the refugee to England, and the passage is infinitely better, but—alas for Monsieur Perrotin—these advantages profit him little, he is still as bad a sailor as ever ; Rachel, too, though she has crossed the Channel before, cannot help thinking, as she lies moaning in her berth, that the vessel

will go to the bottom when about halfway over ; but little Wat, with a child's fearlessness has a child's immunity from all sea sorrows, and so becomes the pet and plaything of everybody on board. As the sun rises above Cape La Hève, and the coast of France becomes more clearly defined, Monsieur Perrotin crawls on deck, and with a very green and yellow countenance, which the freshness of the morning air gradually converts to blue with a shade of black, eagerly scans the still distant headlands, and renounces his belief in the accuracy of nautical time-keeping ; he feels a strong desire to leap overboard and swim to shore, but he is too feeble to leap and unfortunately he cannot swim, so he seats himself, helplessly on a coil of wet rope, and waits, with many a shiver, for the moment of release. It comes at last ; an almost pantomimic change takes place, the up-and-down motion suddenly ceases, the wavering outline of the town is fixed, the steamer is in smooth water, and Monsieur Perrotin is a new man ; all his buoyancy returns, he chatters and skips about with a freedom and vivacity which can only be rivalled by the caged parrots and monkeys that await him on the noisy quay. He is able now to support his wife on one arm and to carry little Wat in the other, loaded as he is besides with a heavy cloak and a large umbrella. Such impediments, however, are *bagatelles* to Monsieur Perrotin. Is he not a Frenchman returning to France—returning, moreover, from England?—a fact which, with all the love our neighbours bear us, greatly enhances the abstract pleasure of the thing.

At Havre, Monsieur Perrotin expects a letter from the Abbé Ramier ; the *poste restante* does not disappoint him, and he learns that a home is offered till he can find one for himself, his wife, and his adopted child. This is a great triumph for one so isolated as the poor teacher of languages, and in the exuberance of his spirits he can talk of nothing else to Rachel, all the way from Havre to Rouen.

"Yes," he says, with a radiant air, "that is the character of a true Frenchman ! He divides himself into four for his friend !"

And the eulogy is not extravagant, where circumstances are propitious. But then—circumstances ! Even the self-immolation of a Frenchman is sometimes controlled by

them, and this, to a certain extent, was the case with the Abbé Ramier. He was a kind-hearted, generous man, and as he came with outstretched hands to greet the family party when the vehicle which conveyed them stopped in front of his door, the genuineness of his welcome could not be doubted. I am not, however, quite so sure that the same cordiality shone in the face of Madame Gembloux, the abbé's *gouvernante*, who stood in the background, with her hands thrust into the pockets of her apron.

The Abbé Ramier, now turned of sixty, was the type of a numerous class in the Gallican Church. Pious, charitable, and self-denying, he was always ready with words of comfort and acts of kindness for all who needed his advice or assistance; he was alike the friend of the poor and the consoler of the unhappy; his active benevolence forestalled every want, as far as his means extended, and when these were exhausted, as indeed often happened, he knew how to plead for his clients with those more wealthy than himself. Tendencies of this sort could not make him a rich man, but they left him a happy one, and so cheerful was his disposition, that to hear him talk, a stranger might easily have supposed that the good abbé had never known a care. What was it, then, that checked him very often in mid-career when following the impulses of his nature? Look well at the Abbé Ramier—withdraw your eyes from those placid features, and then turn them upon the sour visage of Madame Gembloux, and you will have discovered the cause.

Madame Gembloux was rather over fifty than under, but her actual age is of no great consequence, since she was one of those persons who have never looked young; some people said, indeed, that she had always been an old woman, so that she might have commenced her housekeeping duties at any period of life without giving cause for scandal. The breath of calumny, however, had never sullied her reputation, for—though it does not absolutely follow—Madame Gembloux began her *gouvernante's* career in a state of respected widowhood, her defunct husband having been the principal *Suisse* of the cathedral, and the halo which surrounds that gorgeous description of functionary is scarcely extinguished by mortality. He lived, at all events, in the memory of Madame Gembloux, who seemed never weary of

citing his authority, as if he had been a Father of the Church, instead of one of its Masters of the Ceremonies. Beauty was at no time the portion of Madame Gembloux, and years had not brought its attraction: on the contrary, what was originally hard had grown harder, what was plain, plainer. The epithet scraggy was well applied to her tall, bony figure, and for her face it was sallow as parchment, with a *souffçon* of red at the tip of her nose, suggesting—but no—that was impossible—it could only have been a perpetual cold in the head. Sententious and severe to all the world beside, the only sign of tenderness which her nature betrayed was in favour of a very ill-tempered, nondescript little dog, her constant companion, and the cause of more annoyance to the society which Madame Gembloux frequented than would have been an irruption of half the lawyers in the city. Her merit was a lynx-eyed watchfulness over the property of the abbé, towards whom her bearing exhibited an odd mixture of tyranny and respect. If there was one word in the language which she disliked more than another, that word was hospitality; and, unluckily for the temper of Madame Gembloux, the abbé gave her only too frequent occasion for denouncing it. The arrival of Monsieur Perrotin and family was one of these occasions, but in the presence of her master her unwillingness to receive his guests was confined to external manifestations, and found no tongue to proclaim it. But, in truth, very little attention was paid by the travellers to any one but the abbé, who saluted all three with a warmth that—in one respect, at least—was, in the opinion of Madame Gembloux, wholly unclerical.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ABBÉ'S GOUVERNANTE.

ALTHOUGH holding the nominally dependent situation of *gouvernante* in the establishment of the Abbé Ramier—which, besides herself, consisted only of a stout, hardworking country girl of twenty—Madame Gembloux was very

much her own mistress. The wants of the abbé were few: to keep his clothes and linen in decent order, prepare his frugal meals, and prevent the household drudge—whom she ruled with a rod of iron—from dusting or arranging his books, were her principal duties, and these performed, a great deal of time was left at her disposal. When at home, the abbé was constantly occupied in his study, and Madame Gembloux liked him best to be at home: for then, as she said, he was not wasting his substance on every idle person he met—that being her definition of charity.

But the possession of leisure did not cause the hours to hang heavy on the hands of Madame Gembloux, for, if she had little employment within doors, she gave herself plenty abroad, having—as befitted the widow of a distinguished official—a large circle of acquaintance. This is a round-about way of saying that the Abbé Ramier's *gouvernante* was a great gossip, but, as she still lives, I wish to spare her feelings, in case this true history (of which the right of translation is reserved) should ever be done into French, and under those circumstances happen to meet her eye. Professionally, as I may say, a church-goer, Madame Gembloux always found somebody to talk to, whether the matinsong or vesper-hymn invited; and when religion forebore its claims, there were the worldly attractions of the street and market-place. It is not absolutely necessary that a gossip should be goodnatured. A merciful ordination permits the female tongue to say everything that comes uppermost, and, consequently, what is said depends entirely upon the *animus* of the speaker. From the lips of the amiable princess in the fairy tale fell nothing but pearls and diamonds, while the spiteful princess, her sister, saluted her companions with a shower of toads and snakes. The conversation of Madame Gembloux belonged, for the most part, to the last-named category. The chief, indeed almost the only, exception to her general habit of censure, was the late lamented Gembloux; but there were many who remembered the married life of the *gouvernante*, who whispered that the portly *Suisse* only profited by a posthumous immunity.

All of us who have loitered in the great fruit-market at Rouen, which fills the wide area in front of the western

entrance to the cathedral, and, withdrawing our gaze from the exquisite sculpture which travels higher than the eye can trace it, have cast it curiously upon the parti-coloured multitude that throngs the square, must at one moment or other have singled out the figure of Madame Gembloux. See where she stands—a little to the right of that group of women in the high, snow-white, Cauchoix caps, variegated kerchiefs, bright-red petticoats, blue stockings, and peaked *sabots*—with her little dog by her side, ready to snarl at man or bite his kind, as opportunity offers, her basket on her left arm, the forefinger of her right hand extended, and her head bent over the stall of an older woman than herself, a dealer in peaches and melons, who, low-seated in a high-back chair, looks up attentively to catch every syllable she utters! By the sober hue of her coffee-coloured garments, by her rusty apron—a fragment of one of her master's well-worn *soutanes*—by her dingy black-lace cap, you may recognize the clerical *gouvernante*; and if you lend an attentive ear, you may guess, from what I have already said, that it really is Madame Gembloux who speaks.

The *commère* to whom she addresses herself replies to the name of Lebigre, and I may observe that she is the wife of a most respectable *gendarme*, and the mother of a numerous family. It should also be mentioned that the period when this conversation takes place is exactly a week after the arrival of Monsieur Perrotin at Rouen.

“At last!” exclaims Madame Gembloux; “yes—Madame Lebigre, at last those individuals are gone! After staying eight days! Figure to yourself, Madame Lebigre, eight days!”

“It is astonishing!” replies the fruit-merchant, with slow emphasis, as she takes a pinch of snuff and offers her box, which the other does not refuse.

“Ah!” continues Madame Gembloux, “if Monsieur l'Abbé had but consulted me! But no! A letter arrives with a foreign postmark already fifteen days since—and I—who, as you know, Madame Lebigre, have lived twelve years with Monsieur l'Abbé, and am acquainted with the handwriting of all his correspondents—I cannot tell from whom is this letter. Naturally I seek to know. But it is inconceivable—is it not? Monsieur l'Abbé says nothing. He



reads it through from beginning to end—imagine, Madame Lebigre, three pages of writing,—and though he sees me standing by all the time, he says not a word. When he has ended, he folds the letter up, puts it in his pocket, and asks for his hat and stick. Then I permit myself an observation. ‘Monsieur l’Abbé,’ I remark, ‘that was a very long letter.’ I obtain for answer, ‘It came from a very old friend.’ After that, Monsieur l’Abbé takes up his hat and stick and goes out, leaving me planted there. I work my mind the whole day long to discover who is this old friend. Impossible! In vain I interrogate the past: no name presents itself to my recollection. Ah, that excellent Gembloux! never had he any secrets for me! Even to the money he received for showing the cathedral to strangers, he related all. And when one lives for twelve years in the same house with another, one has the right to know everything. Is it not so, Madame Lebigre?”

“That is a truth, Madame Gembloux, as old as the bridge of Rouen.”

“Even older! But what does Monsieur l’Abbé? Still he persists in an obstinate silence! Madame Lebigre, I detest ingratitude. The ungrateful have my contempt. You conceive, then, my feelings! On the following day I endure a yet greater outrage. In his turn, Monsieur l’Abbé writes a letter. It is hard to make you believe a thing so unheard of: with his own hands he takes that letter to the post! Here is evidently a concealment—a concealment from me, to whom Gembloux himself was perfect frankness. Without confidence, Madame Lebigre, one has nothing. Internally, I resolve to surrender my charge.”

“Ah! that is what I call a spirit.”

“Perhaps my design is seen in my eyes—perhaps there are other reasons for an altered conduct—but on the fourth day of my intention, while I still am meditating, observing also a haughty indifference to the house affairs, arrives another letter, like the first. I present it with a calm dignity to Monsieur l’Abbé, repeating to myself, ‘Now, we shall see!’ Here, then, is what happens! ‘Madame Gembloux,’ says Monsieur l’Abbé, when he had cast his eye over the contents of the letter—there was little enough

in it this time—‘we must prepare to receive some guests!’ ‘How, sir!’ I replied, almost without breath,—‘guests?’ ‘Yes,’ he continues, ‘my old friend Monsieur Perrotin’—that is the name of the individual—take care, Madame Lebigre, how it gets into your books—‘with his wife and child, are coming from England to live at Rouen. I have discovered a house for them, but until it can be got ready, they will stay here.’ ‘Is this serious?’ I ask. ‘Quite so,’ rejoins Monsieur l’Abbé; ‘why should it be otherwise?’ ‘Only,’ I return, ‘because there is no place for them.’ ‘Oh,’ says Monsieur l’Abbé, ‘we can easily contrive that. I give up my bedroom to Monsieur and Madame Perrotin, and there is the closet next to it for the child.’ ‘And where,’ I demand, ‘does Monsieur l’Abbé himself intend to sleep?’ ‘I must request you,’ he answers, with a smiling air, ‘to accommodate me;’ but before I have time to shudder at the dangerous idea, he explains. It is his wish that, for a few nights, I consent to occupy the same bed with that creature Mélanie, our servant girl. I don’t say, Madame Lebigre, that Monsieur l’Abbé is altogether without good qualities, otherwise I should long since have chosen another asylum—but of what value are any good qualities when they are eaten up by selfishness? To gratify these strangers—people without a *sou*—I was to be made a sacrifice!’

“I perceive. At once, then, you refused. I like courage.”

“The words, Madame Lebigre, were on my lips, and I don’t know why they were not pronounced—perhaps because I reflected that the flower of my life, since the death of my adored Gembloux, had been bestowed upon Monsieur l’Abbé; but whatever were my reasons, I devoured my indignation in silence. Useless all other objections: these people were invited, and so they must come. Until the day arrived, you may suppose, Madame Lebigre, that I did not occupy myself in gathering rose-leaves to make their beds.”

The old fruitwoman chuckled, and again offered her box.

“And what kind of folks are they?” she inquired.

“That is not a difficult question to answer; oh no, it is only too easy. When I tell you that I never saw such a

person as that Madame Perrotin, you will readily understand. Figure to yourself, in the beginning, one who cannot speak French—not even the common *patois* of Mélanie. Then the way in which she is dressed! I thought I should have burst with laughter the moment I set eyes on her. Such a bonnet! Made, I suppose, in England. It is enough to make one die, only to look at it! Her age? Oh, who can tell! Far, very far from young, my dear Madame Lebigre. Her looks? To me anything but pleasing. I detest what people call a colour: those Englishwomen always have one—like beetroot. And instead of dark hair, like yours or mine, fancy a pale brown—just like the dirt on one's shoes, and hanging about her face in long curls. Her child? Um! I have my suspicions! Unless a red face makes a resemblance, I see none between them. However, he *may* be *her* child; certainly he cannot be the son of Monsieur Perrotin. That, after all, is his affair! To me it is nothing. But whoever the boy belongs to, they have no great reason to be proud of him, and I, for my part, predict him a bad future."

Madame Lebigre professionally observed, in proverbial Norman phrase: "Blossoms, you know, are not apples, and apples are not cider. But what of Monsieur Perrotin himself?"

"He, at least, is old. Long and dry as a broomstick, with a nose like the bill of a woodcock! When the revolution was, ten years ago, he ran away from Paris while they were fighting in the streets for the tricoloured flag and our citizen-king." (Madame Gembloux was a furious Orleanist.) "He went to England, that miserable country! Now he comes here to be a schoolmaster, they say. To teach French, and I don't know what besides, in Rouen, with our superb academy and all its professors, and Monsieur l'Abbé at their head! He had better begin with his wife and that impudent boy, who, like his mother, is ignorant—as ignorant, my dear Madame Lebigre, as that pumpkin! He thought to make friends with Bijou—come here, Bijou, my darling—but my pretty dog knows how to show his teeth—and then the little *gamin*, he threatened to kick my poor innocent, my cherished one, but Bijou took refuge in my arms. Judge, then, if I have not reason to

dislike that boy! Oh, they are altogether an odious, a designing family. But, thank Heaven, they are gone at last! In another week we should have been eaten out of house and home!"

"And where are they gone? From Rouen?"

"Would to Heaven that had been so! No, Madame Lebigre, only into the next street. Not three hundred yards off. Monsieur l'Abbé wished them to be near him. In my opinion they would be near enough on the other side of Paris, or back again in that poor, wretched country of England. But I must say adieu, Madame Lebigre, for I have a dozen friends to call upon to-day."

"Well, Madame Gembloux, good company must part, as King Dagobert said to his dogs. But I should like to see this strange Englishwoman who is unable to speak French. Perhaps next Sunday she will be coming here to church!"

"Church! Here!" screamed Madame Gembloux. "God forbid. Do not suppose I hate that woman without reason. My religion tells me to do so. She is a heretic!"

While Madame Lebigre was making the sign of the cross, Madame Gembloux caught up Bijou and disappeared round the corner, to repeat the story of her wrongs in every house she entered.

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## CHAPTER XV

VOX—ET PRÆTEREA NIHIL.

AN entirely new life opened upon Rachel and her adopted child. It was new also to Monsieur Perrotin, for he had returned to France in quite a fresh character, being now a married man and quasi *père de famille*. This latter vicarious duty he performed with all the energy and all the awkwardness which usually characterize the acceptor of a substituted progeny, taking our example from the familiar instance of a hen that rears a duckling. But consanguinity itself could scarcely have drawn closer the tie which subsisted between Rachel and little Wat. The boy knew no other mother, and as Rachel had no means of showing his right to the

name of Cobham—Mrs. Scrope having taken possession of her daughter's marriage certificate, with the intention, no doubt, of destroying it—he went by the name of Walter Perrotin.

We have heard how the newly-arrived family were established in the immediate neighbourhood of the Abbé Ramier. It was far away from the centre of the city's busy life, in a street that seemed almost deserted, such a one as may be seen in all large French towns, where the principal suburban feature is the absence of all pavement, the non-existence of lamps, the length of the garden walls, and the shut-up look of the houses. On the same principle, I suppose, that makes the liveliest animals burrow in the loneliest places, our mercurial neighbours care little where they make their homes, being strengthened in their indifference by the fact that if they really had homes they would never know where to pass their evenings. Monsieur Perrotin, though not without a share of the gay temperament of his countrymen, had a better reason for feeling satisfied with the choice of his abode; it was the cheapest part of Rouen, and, to a studious man like himself, quietness, which no one could deny to the locality, was an additional recommendation. To live cheaply was, in every respect, desirable, for all his economics yielded only just enough to make it out upon; but he never allowed his wife to suppose that Walter was in the slightest degree a charge: if he sought for the means of increasing their income, it was, he alleged, the better to provide for the boy's future, not because of its being absolutely necessary to enable him to meet current expenses.

A teacher of languages, who has passed ten years in a foreign country, possesses a kind of *ex-officio* right to be considered master of the one which he has been daily accustomed to hear, and Monsieur Perrotin, fully believing that he possessed the necessary qualifications, did not hesitate to announce his intention of giving lessons in English to the inhabitants of Rouen. He accordingly inserted an advertisement in the principal newspaper of that city, in which he stated, that "having long resided in London and its immediate neighbourhood, where the purest English is spoken," he undertook to qualify the sons of merchants, manufacturers, and others, who might be desirous of acquiring a

grammatical knowledge of that language, "together with a faultless pronunciation." This advertisement, backed by the influence of the Abbé Ramier, soon procured him several pupils, whom he attended *en ville*, and if we in England owe any grudge against William the Norman for having conquered us, we may console ourselves, even at this distance of time, by the way in which the Normans of Rouen were compelled to endure the English yoke as exemplified in the teaching of Monsieur Perrotin. Of more positive value, fortunately, was the instruction in his own tongue which he gave to Walter, who, being of quick intelligence and good natural parts, made very rapid progress, as much to the satisfaction of his master as to the unbounded astonishment of Rachel. She did not particularly shine in lingual accomplishments, and privately entertained an opinion that everybody ought to be made to speak English—because, as she said, it was so easy! What she did shine in, however, was the art of making a happy home, and though her husband had left the land where comfort is supposed exclusively to dwell, he found it always when he returned to his own fireside. To achieve this end, Rachel had, of course, to battle for it with Loubette, her *femme de ménage*, but in the end she always gained the day, a circumstance which greatly increased the ill-will of Madame Gembloux, who secretly informed herself of everything that went on in Monsieur Perrotin's establishment, and lost no opportunity of inveighing bitterly against all foreign innovations. The *gouvernante's* spitefulness was kept alive—not that its extinction was by any means likely—by the increasing kindness of the Abbé Ramier towards "those English." Walter speedily became a great favourite with him, and the abbé, himself a person of family and accustomed to good society, took pains to form the boy's manners, and elevate him above the condition in which he was accidentally placed.

In this quiet way three or four years glided on, with nothing to disturb their even tenor. At last an event of more than ordinary interest occurred. It arose out of circumstances which require a few words of introduction.

From a very early period there existed, in various parts of Europe, institutions which had been the means of propa-

gating, in all Catholic countries, the science of ecclesiastical music. In France these institutions bore the name of *Mâitries*, and there was scarcely a great city with whose cathedral service was not associated an establishment for musical instruction, the most notable being those of Paris, Metz, Troyes, Lyons, Bordeaux, Meaux, and Rouen. Though the original object of the *Mâitries* was the cultivation of sacred music, its directors did not exclude from their teaching that which was profane, and practice was permitted as well on the piano as on the organ. The revolution of 1791, which swept away, for a time, everything that pertained to Christian worship, destroyed the *Mâitries*, and scattered far and wide the whole race of organists and full five thousand cathedral-singers, the greater part of whom never had the means of resuming their occupations. In consequence of the schools of music being thus entirely ruined, the Paris *Conservatoire* was established in 1826, and attempts were made elsewhere to place the *Mâitries* on their former footing. The cathedral of Rouen was too rich in musical traditions to be overlooked by those who had at heart the renovation of choral science, and by degrees, with effort, the old institution was once more established. To endow its purpose with vigour, restrictions were set aside, and instruction was not confined to any religious denomination.

Of all people in the world a musical enthusiast is the one who considers the end more than the means by which it is accomplished, and amongst musical enthusiasts, Monsieur Cantagrel of Rouen held a very high place. He was an intimate friend of the Abbé Ramier, and it so happened that he was with him one day, when he suddenly stopped in the midst of an animated conversation on the subject of his darling *Mâitrie* to listen to some sounds which proceeded from the courtyard below. They were the words of a song in a foreign language, and the singer was Walter.

He had gone that morning to see the abbé, as was his frequent custom, but access had been denied by Madame Gembloux, who said her master was too busy to be disturbed, and desired him to go away. Walter had no greater liking for the old *gouvernante* than she for all his family, and coolly told her that, as his time was of no consequence, he would

wait till the abbé was disengaged. So he sat himself down on the brink of the old well in the courtyard, and amused himself as well as he was able. He would willingly have pelted Bijou, who held as small a place in his regard as Madame Gembloux, and she, for her part, would not have minded tumbling Walter into the well, if she could have done so with impunity; but as both the belligerent parties had their hands tied, they only sat and looked askance at each other, Madame Gembloux occupying the doorway of the house with her knitting, and thus effectually preventing Walter from gaining admission without her leave.

When a boy is balked of his purpose, and can't do the thing he wishes, he usually has recourse to whistling or singing. Walter beguiled the moments by an effort in the last-named department of art, his theme being the adventures of an elderly female whose reputation for tractability did not stand very high amongst her neighbours. That Walter applied the song to Madame Gembloux was plain enough, and though she could not by any possibility understand a word of it, he looked her full in the face while he sang, beginning in a very low key, and, as he grew bolder, gradually rising to the very top of his voice, for the amiable purpose of irritating her—a design in which he was quite successful. I wish, for the muse's sake, that Walter had selected a nobler specimen of the British ballad, but, to say the truth, his repertory was limited; moreover, he had learnt it from Rachel, which was quite enough to make it a favourite with him. So he began, with a running accompaniment of colloquy, in an under-tone:

“There was an old woman, and what do you think?—

Yes, you may look, Madame Gembloux—

What do you think?

She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink,

Victuals and drink—

Frogs and soupe maigre, Madame Gembloux,—

were the chief of her diet—

though I don't think you'd stick at roast beef and plum-pudding, if they came in your way, Madame Gembloux—

Frogs and soupe maigre were the chief of her diet,  
And yet this old woman”—



here he began to quaver in famous style—

“would never—ne-ver,  
Never, never, never, ne-ve-e-e-r be quiet!

And that's what you never will be, old Madame Gembloux—ne-ver, ne-ver—n-e-e——”

“Mon Dieu! what a delicious organ,” exclaimed Monsieur Cantagrel, who had placed himself at the abbé's window to listen, and was able no longer to control his admiration. “What a charming voice; but how very ill-regulated!”

Walter looked up and stopped, blushing all crimson to the very roots of his hair.

“Ill-regulated—ah,” muttered Madame Gembloux—“not the voice only, but the good-for-nothing singer into the bargain.”

This compliment, however, did not reach the ears of Monsieur Cantagrel.

“Who are you?” he called out.

But by this time the Abbé Ramier had also approached the window.

“I can tell you,” he said; “he is the son of my friend and neighbour, Monsieur Perrotin. What are you doing there, my little friend?—why don't you come up?”

“I wanted to do so, sir,” replied Walter, “but Madame Gembloux said I couldn't.”

“Madame Gembloux has no taste for singing, then,” said Monsieur Cantagrel. “But never mind, give me that lovely song again in the open air.”

In the presence of any one he knew, Walter could have sung all day unbidden, but when a stranger asked him he became dumb.

“Ah,” said Monsieur Cantagrel, laughing, “he suffers from the usual malady: modesty, like the sight of a wolf, has taken away his voice. But you must sing again, and to me only. First of all, come here.”

Walter did not refuse this request, but almost hustling Madame Gembloux, and literally treading on Bijou's tail, who began yelping, he ran up stairs.

“And pray, my friend,” said Monsieur Cantagrel, when the abbé had patted Walter on the head and presented him

—"pray who taught you—I won't say to sing, for you know nothing about that—but to use your voice in that extraordinary manner."

"I don't know, sir," answered Walter, as red as before—"I think I taught myself."

"Ah, we must give you a better teacher. Should you like to learn?"

"Very much, sir."

"And sing here, in our cathedral?"

Walter hesitated. "I can only sing two or three English songs, sir. They won't do for the cathedral."

"Pardieu!" returned Monsieur Cantagrel, laughing again; "I should think not. You shall be accommodated with something better."

"Our little friend," said the abbé, aside, "is not of our Church. Monsieur Perrotin is a good Catholic, but the boy and his mother are Protestants."

"N'importe," was the rejoinder of the musical enthusiast. "He has the finest voice I ever heard at his age. We must have him in the *Maîtrise*."

Monsieur Perrotin and Rachel were forthwith consulted. It was stipulated at her earnest desire—indeed, without that she would not have consented—that the teaching was to be purely secular, and, that being freely conceded by Monsieur Cantagrel, Walter forthwith became his pupil.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ANGEL-CHORISTER.

Two years have gone by since the scene in the abbé's courtyard, and the most exulting individual in all Rouen is Monsieur Cantagrel. He has a threefold reason for rejoicing: in the first place, he was right about Walter's voice—nothing, people say, can compare with it; in the next, the praise bestowed on the singer is reflected on the teacher; and finally, there is the melody itself, which he enjoys as only a musical enthusiast can.

Monsieur Perrotin, though he does not know a note of music, and cannot even sing through his nose—like the generality of his countrymen—takes great pride in Walter's newly-developed accomplishment; Rachel is proud, too—at the same time she doubts whether she ought to let them make a chorister of Edith's son; the Abbé Ramier is glad, according to his custom, at all that gives pleasure to his friends; but Madame Gembloux, who understands nothing of philanthropy, puts up a secret prayer—for the five hundredth time—that the boy may break down on some very signal occasion.

That possible occasion at last presents itself.

It is the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, the most honoured festival of the Roman Catholic Church, and all the Faithful in Rouen crowd to the cathedral to witness the ceremonies which attend it: some, also, are there who cannot lay claim to that distinctive epithet, but belong—as it were—to the Heathen.

Amongst the latter is a group of strangers, consisting of a gentleman of middle age, a lady in the prime of life, and a very beautiful girl, whose extremely youthful aspect, contrasting with her height, shows that she cannot be much more than fifteen years of age; these three are seated, and standing beside them is a man whose marked air of deference when he speaks betokens the *valet de place* of a very rich Englishman. The principal persons of the party are, indeed, English, not new to the Continent, but returning home from a long sojourn in Italy. To them a religious procession or a highly adorned-festival are no novelty, but the lady has a passion for sacred music, and is piqued by what they have told her at her hotel of the wonders which have been wrought by the *Maîtrise*. "After the Sistine Chapel!" she says, with a compassionate smile; "but no matter, we will go, Sir James." The gentleman thus appealed to, if left to the exercise of his own freewill, would have taken post-horses for Dieppe or the steamboat to Havre—whichever gave him the chance of reaching England soonest—for the sights and sounds of Italy have been to him an infliction, and much rather would he have been on the moors with his setters than listening to the *Miserere* of Allegri beneath the dome of St. Peter's. In fact,

although he has taken a long lease of one of the finest palaces in Rome, and has bought a villa at Frascati, he always comes home for his grouse, leaving his family *in villeggiatura*. He inwardly chafes now at the thoughts of having lost a whole week's shooting—it being already the 15th of August—but *Miladi* is of a somewhat imperious character, and what she wishes is always done; so, instead of pushing on, Sir James takes his hat and accompanies his wife and daughter to Rouen cathedral.

After all, no matter where you have been or whatever you may have seen or heard, that cathedral is worth the visit, whether pacing the aisles alone in the dim, religious, evening light, or standing amid the thronging multitude in the full blaze of the noontide sun as it streams through the coloured panes, with the censers swinging perfume on the air, and the vaulted roof echoing to the organ's solemn peal.

The strangers of whom we have spoken are so placed in one of the transepts that even if they cannot see beyond the screen of the choir, they are able to hear every note of the melody within, and critically *Miladi* addresses herself to the task of comparison. At first her acquiescence is placid: yes, the *maestro di capella* understands his *métier*; the *solo* parts are very fairly executed; the *ensemble* is good; but to think of comparing the service with——Stay, what is that? Why does it seem as if a wave of sound, such as never had been heard before, floated alone somewhere beneath the vaulted canopy towards which every eye is now turned? Why does every one hold his breath to listen, mute rapture on every face? Hark, it rises—clear, sweet, and soul-sustaining—the hymn to the Virgin:

“Ave maris stella,  
Dei mater alma,  
Atque semper virgo,  
Felix cœli porta.”

Surely that voice descends from heaven!

Again it fills the vault, and the golden motes in the sunbeams tremble with harmony.

It dies away,—so softly, distantly, that “nothing lives ’twixt it and silence!”

Mary Tunstall looks up with streaming eyes.

“That must be an angel, mamma!” she whispers.

Her mother does not answer: her own cheeks are wet.

Sir James, I am sorry to say, is thinking of the grouse: music always has the effect of directing his thoughts to the subject that, for the time, interests him most. If he had been hungry, he would have thought of his dinner.

Lady Tunstall makes no confession of her impressions, but when her handkerchief has performed its office, she turns to the *valet de place*, who is greatly *attendri* by what he has witnessed, having a perfect command of countenance, and asks him who it is to whom she has just been listening? As fifty priests, like so many bulls of Basan, are now striving to roar down the organ, private conversation may safely be resumed. The *valet de place* informs *Miladi* that it is a young pupil of Monsieur Cantagrel, the director of the *Maitrise*—he reproaches himself for having forgotten the name (which he never knew)—but he tells her, what is even more astonishing, that the singer is an English boy. Madame, besides, will be surprised to learn that he does not stand amongst the regular singers. No—he is up there—where everybody can see him! And the *valet de place* points to the *triforium* gallery above the choir, where Monsieur Cantagrel has hidden his pupil behind a richly-carved projection. More he cannot relate, for the deep diapason ceases, and again the thrilling melody of the angel-chorister awakens all to rapt attention.

Thus the service proceeds to its close, and but for the conduct of two of the congregation, I should have said the delight was universal. These two were Sir James Tunstall, who kept yawning, furtively, behind his hat, and Madame Gembloux, whose grim expression of countenance plainly declared that Walter's success was wormwood to her feelings—figurative wormwood, not the preparation of *absinthe* which gave the suspicious tint to the tip of her nose.

Once in the cathedral, it could not, of course, be quitted without a complete examination. Indeed, the *sacristain* had kept too watchful an eye on the strangers ever since they entered the building to allow them to depart without a taste of his quality as *cicerone*, and the moment the mass was ended and the celebrants were scudding away to change their garments, he presented himself and his keys. With this official character on the right, and the *valet de place* on

the left, Lady Tunstall led the way—full of rapid inquiry, which was her habit everywhere—at a pace which soon left her husband and daughter far behind. They had just lost sight of her, and were looking about them to find where she had gone, when from a narrow doorway between two pillars, close to where they were standing, issued an elderly man and a handsome boy of about sixteen years old, who, seeing strangers so near, paused to let them pass.

As the boy wore a chorister's dress, and evidently came from the upper part of the building, it struck Mary Tunstall, who had heard the information given to her mother, that in him she beheld the unseen singer of the triforium gallery. With the impulse natural to her age, she immediately spoke to him.

"It was you," she said, "who sang so beautifully during the mass! Tell me, if you please, what is your name?"

The boy, as we have already seen, had a habit of blushing; and this sudden question, coupled with the excessive beauty of the girlish speaker, sent the crimson tide at once to his cheeks.

"My name," he returned, after a little hesitation, "is—Walter. What is yours?"

"Oh, mine," said Mary Tunstall, laughing—"mine is of no consequence; I can't sing the least in the world."

"I wish I couldn't," was Walter's quick reply, "if it prevents me from knowing who you are."

She blushed in her turn, as she answered:

"If you wish so *much* to know, I will tell you. I am called Mary!"

"Do you live here?" he asked eagerly.

"No," she replied. "We are only passing through Rouen. This is my papa, and mamma is——"

A few shrill words fully proclaimed where Lady Tunstall was.

"Sir James, Sir James, where are you? Come and see Cœur de Lion's tomb!"

Thus summoned, Sir James, who had been rather amused at the colloquy between the children, shrugged up his shoulders at the interruption, made a slight inclination to Monsieur Cantagrel, who was Walter's companion, and taking his daughter by the hand, led her away. She turned her

head, however, to look once more at Walter; his eyes were still fixed upon her, and in the glance of both might have been read the intelligence of mutual liking. How willingly would they each have lingered to cement the feeling which had grown so swiftly, but Monsieur Cantagrel was quite as impatient to conduct his pupil to the préfet, who had desired to see him, as Lady Tunstall to dilate on all she saw; and so they parted without another word.

Mary ran at once to her mother.

"Oh, mamma!" she said, "we have been talking to the English boy with the beautiful voice! He is so nice! I wish you would come and speak to him."

"What, the little chorister! Where is he?"

But the question was asked in vain. The *valet de place* could see nobody when he went into the aisle to look. Lady Tunstall seemed vexed. She never liked to be disappointed, and the quick interpreter of expression, whose trade was that study, volunteered a means of gratifying the desire of *Miladi*. He knew a person very well, the *gouvernante* of the Abbé Ramier, who was the intimate friend of the director of the *Maîtrise*: from her he could obtain all that was wanted; if *Miladi* desired to see the chorister-boy, the *gouvernante* no doubt would hasten to have the honour of bringing him to *Miladi's* hotel. The proposition was agreeable to Lady Tunstall, and it was settled that when the sight-seeing for the day was over, the *valet de place* should go to Madame Gembloux and mention *Miladi's* wishes.

At a late hour that evening the *valet de place* appeared before Lady Tunstall. He was, he said, *au désespoir*. Such a thing as a failure had never occurred in all his life before; he had been unable to find the pretty English boy, not from any neglect of his, but the *gouvernante*, Madame Gembloux, of whom he had asked many questions, could give no information concerning the object of his search: all she said was that the boy had been taken into the country, and would be absent, she knew, for several days.

I will not say that Mary Tunstall cried when she heard this piece of false intelligence, but she sat very quiet all the rest of the evening, as if she were thinking deeply. *Miladi*, more philosophical—or, perhaps, more capricious—said it

was of no consequence; and, turning to Sir James, told him she should leave Rouen very early next morning.

In this manner—through the treachery of Madame Gembloux—Walter lost the opportunity of being recognized by his mother's family.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### FIRST LOVE.

WHO can fix the date when the heart for the first time beats with the passion which—whether for life or but for an hour—absorbs us all in turn?

Some very susceptible bosoms have loved almost in infancy; others, informed perhaps by no greater wisdom, have waited till infancy came round again; but most of us, if we write our annals true, must confess to having indulged a flame which began to burn a great deal too soon for present or prospective comfort.

At the mature age of sixteen Walter Cobham was already a lover. Love was a kind of heirloom in his family—the only succession, indeed, which seemed likely to be his inheritance—and he took possession of it on the day when he met with Mary Tunstall.

The malady declared itself by the most unmistakable signs. Naturally of strong animal spirits, and fond of active, even of violent exercises, he suddenly became silent and subdued; study was distasteful to him, and he shunned the society of his playmates to wander about alone—sometimes by the river's brink, sometimes on the heights, or amid the forest glades which at the distance of a few miles surrounded the city, but oftener in the cathedral's lonely aisles. Why he preferred the last-named place to all the rest requires little explanation. The beautiful vision which had once appeared there was always before his eyes, and he haunted the spot in the vague expectation that it would again be vouchsafed to him. In vain, however. His heart had only remembrance to feed on, and it was a diet on which he grew visibly thinner.



His pale cheek and restless expression could not long escape the watchfulness of Rachel. What ailed her darling—was he ill, or had anything vexed him? No—nothing was the matter that he knew of: if he was no longer hungry he really could not tell why; and as to his companions at the *Maitrise*, it was his own fault if he did not join in their amusements—they were as good-natured as ever. Had Madame Gembloux been cross again? If so, Rachel—though by no means up in her French—would tell the *gouvernante* a piece of her mind, and expose her before the abbé! Pooh! Walter never troubled himself about Madame Gembloux; he had even ceased to care to tease her. What it could be, then, Rachel vainly pondered. Her own union with Monsieur Perrotin had merely been based on simple liking, just as much as usually goes towards the composition of a *ménage* in her class of life—something of convenience considered in it, but of love—in its all-engrossing, overwhelming character—not a modicum. Besides, who could suppose the predicament of having fallen in love in a boy of fifteen!

In the first enthusiasm of the moment, before the wound was felt, Walter had talked in raptures of the lovely English girl; how sweetly she looked, how kindly she spoke, how much more beautiful she was than any one in Rouen! But, after a few days, when everybody but himself had forgotten the circumstance of the meeting, he hesitated to speak of her even to Rachel—and this hesitation, the more he thought about her, resolved itself soon into absolute silence.

Rachel, then, had no resource but to believe that she must coax her darling's appetite to make him better: having no suspicion that his heart was affected, she centred her ideas on his stomach. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this treatment would have proved effectual, but in Walter's instance it failed, and poor Rachel was driven to her wits' end to devise the means of restoring the boy to his former health and spirits.

While meditating on the advisability of calling in the advice of Monsieur Perrotin—whom she had feared to alarm—accident came to her assistance.

She was sitting by herself, at work, one day, when she

heard a tap at the door. On opening it she saw before her a tall, handsome man, wearing a cloak nearly covered with braiding, and a purple velvet cap adorned with a broad band of resplendent gold lace. The cap was speedily converted from its right use by a flourish of the hand, and the flourisher, bowing to Rachel, inquired if he had not the honour of speaking to Madame Perrotin? To say "Wee, musseer," was not difficult, and Rachel said so.

"In that case, madame," continued the stranger, in French, "I have a thousand excuses to offer, and a thousand regrets to express. I have been guilty of a most unpardonable inadvertence."

Rachel only half understood the speaker's words, and was wholly at a loss to account for his extreme politeness. She put it to him if he understood English, and finding that, according to his own account, he was capable of expressing himself to perfection in that tongue, she begged he would be kind enough to do so.

"First, then, madame," he said, "I must declare my name and state. I am Jean Baptiste Dufourmantelle, Commissioner of the Grand Hôtel de l'Europe—and here is my *carte*!"

Very much inclined to believe that a foreign potentate had condescended to pay her a visit, Rachel looked round for the carriage which she supposed he meant when he spoke of a cart, but, to her disappointment it must be owned, beheld none. A grimacing stranger with a card in his hand was all that met her view; and then recollecting that the word commissioner signified something less awful in France than in England, she began to comprehend the true character of the personage who addressed her, and, recovering her presence of mind, invited him to walk in and take a seat.

All the necessary preliminaries being now settled, Monsieur Dufourmantelle resumed:

"After I had the honour a month gone away—yes—I admit, shamefully, a month entirely—of accompanying the honourable lord baronet Sir Stuntall and his amiable lady, with their infant, over the magnificence curiosities of Rouen, I was received instruction when she depart to present a littel

bosk from the charming young personne to the son of you madame !”

“What do you mean, sir ? Who did you say ?” demanded the astonished Rachel.

“The daughterre of Sir Stuntall,” replied the commissioner, “she give to me a bosk, but I forget him in my oder wainscot-pocket until to-day, when I once more wear that.”

“Oh, goodness ! you mean Tunstall, don’t you ?”

“So I say—Stuntall.”

“It was Sir James, and my lady, and Miss Mary.”

“Yas, I believe. Miladi certainly and Meece Mary, and, I cannot tell—Sir Stuntall James—so she call him. Here, madame, is the bosk. I nevere open him.”

So saying, Monsieur Dufourmantelle placed in Rachel’s hand a small square pasteboard box, neatly tied round with a bit of sky-blue ribbon.

“Oh, Musseer Furmantle,” said Rachel, “did my young lady send Walter this ? Was there any message ?”

“She beg of your son to keep him for her sake, because she love so much to have hear him sing.”

“And what did my lady say ?”

“Nothing at all. She never know. The charming Meece was give to me the bosk in the passage as she follow her papa and mamma to their carriage. I never see them no more.”

Rachel was lost in amazement at the strange chance which had thrown Walter and his cousin in each other’s way ; but though she never doubted that it was his cousin whom he had seen, she put numerous questions to Monsieur Dufourmantelle, in order to make sure of the identity of the persons on whom the latter had attended. These were answered in such a way as to confirm her first impression ; and Monsieur Dufourmantelle’s peace being completely made and friendly relations established with Madame Perrotin, the magnificent commissioner took his departure.

It had been all along agreed between Monsieur Perrotin and his wife that, until some favourable opportunity offered for making Walter acquainted with the secret of his birth, the history of his family should be concealed from him. The question now arose in Rachel’s mind, was this the occasion ? Her heart was so full, that if she had replied on the impulse

of the moment, she would at once have told him all ; but, strong as her inclination might be, she was compelled to defer it, for Walter, as had frequently been the case of late, did not come home to dinner. Monsieur Perrotin, however, was not an absentee ; his course of teaching always brought him back in excellent cue for the meal, and he generally fell to with the avidity which his countrymen invariably develop when a savory mess of pottage is set before them. But this day the case was altered : he saw by his wife's face that something unusual had occurred, and though his knife and fork were already raised, he suspended his operations to ask her what was the matter. On learning that Rachel had a communication to make about Walter, he sat immovably fixed to hear it, his fondness for the boy being scarcely less than that of his wife. Her tale was soon told, and it was followed by the inquiry whether Monsieur Perrotin thought that the time for explanation with Walter had arrived ? The teacher of languages was of a contrary opinion, and replied to Rachel's wish for immediate disclosure by arguing that a casual meeting, like the one in question, afforded them no hold on Mrs. Scrope's sympathies, on which alone they could reckon with any advantage to the prospects of Walter. Had Sir James and Lady Tunstall interested themselves about their *protégé*, the case would have been different ; but as the interview had ended in a mere childish *souvenir*, Monsieur Perrotin thought they had better wait. It might not be amiss to keep an eye upon the movements of the Tunstalls, now they were in England, and this he could do, he imagined, through the medium of his friend Mr. Williamms (otherwise the "White Bear,, Piccadilly") ; but if Rachel took his advice, she would only give the present, whatever it was, to Walter, and say nothing just yet about the young lady that sent it.

On this principle the discussion was finally settled ; but when Walter at last came in, it was with increased anxiety that Rachel met him. Her heart was more than ever moved to think that another occupied the place alone which he, by right, ought at least to have shared. Lady Tunstall's child was dear to her as being of Edith's blood, but still there was no comparison, in her estimation, between that child and Edith's son, and it grieved her to behold the difference

of their relative positions. Surely if Miss Agatha—as she always called Lady Tunstall—had seen her nephew, she must have been struck by his appearance. What a misfortune that she had not! It was as well, perhaps, for Madame Gembloux, that her spiteful conduct was unknown to Rachel.

Walter entered with a listless air, and threw himself into a chair without speaking: he seemed to Rachel to look paler and thinner than ever. She went close up to him, and putting her hand tenderly on his shoulder, asked him why he had not returned at the usual hour? He had been, he said, for a very long walk in the forest of Rouvray, on the other side of the river. Why did he go so far? He did not know; he wanted something to do. Rachel was sure he had had nothing to eat—would he have some dinner now?—he must. No: he did not want any.

“But if I give you something, Walter, that you will like very much, promise to do what I ask.”

“I will do anything for you, dear Rachel, that I can, without promising. I know,” he continued, smiling faintly,—“I know what it is.”

“Guess, then,” returned Rachel, smiling in her turn: it was the first time for several days past.

“*Gelée de pommes!*” said Walter: “I know you went to Monsieur Vermeil’s shop the last time you were in the *Rue des Carmes*.”

“You have guessed wrong this time: try again.”

“Is it that pretty gray cap with the blue tassel that I said I saw in Blangy the tailor’s window?”

“No. But you will never find out. Nor where it came from, either. Look here!”

She drew out the little square box tied round with sky-blue ribbon, and held it before him.

“What can it be?” he exclaimed, his curiosity fully aroused. “Something you bought at the fair?”

“I did not buy it. I know no more than you what is in the box. Open it and see.”

Walter eagerly untied the ribbon, which fell on the floor. In an instant the lid of the box was off, and there, embedded in jeweller’s cotton, was a small, delicate, cameo ring.

“Oh, how beautiful!” he cried, as he turned the shell

towards him. At the same moment the colour rushed again to his hollow cheek, he trembled and sat with lips apart, scarcely breathing: his emotion was so great, that Rachel felt almost afraid.

"What a sweet face!" she said.

"It is a likeness, Rachel—a likeness of—of—of—oh, dear, dear Rachel, where did it come from?"

"You remember the young lady in the cathedral who praised your singing? She left it for you with Musseer Furmantle, of the Europe Hotel, when she went away. He ought to have brought it a month ago."

"The rascal!" cried Walter; "I'll tear all the fur off *his* mantle the first time I catch sight of him. Oh, if I had had this before!"

And, to Rachel's astonishment, he pressed the cameo to his lips and kissed it over and over again: he then caught up the ribbon, kissed that too, and thrust it into his bosom.

"It is herself, her very self," he kept on repeating. "I knew it at once—and so would you have known it, Rachel, if you had ever seen her!"

"Why, Walter, one would almost fancy you had fallen in love with the ring!"

"With the ring! Oh, Rachel!" he said, throwing himself into her arms and burying his head on her neck—"oh, Rachel, dear—it is beautiful Mary I love! For a whole month I have thought of no one but her. Will you forgive me?"

Rachel replied with tears—but that evening was the happiest she had known for many a year.

And what a change was suddenly wrought in Walter!

Not so much as regarded companionship, for he still felt the same strong desire to be alone—but his solitary walks were no longer sad ones. All the buoyancy of his nature had returned; he was intoxicated with a new sense of happiness. But though the light danced in his eyes brighter than ever, though a sweeter smile played on his lips, it was still only at rare intervals that he gave himself back to the ordinary amusements of his age. He was too eager to taste the delight of gazing on the cameo—which, boy-like, he wore next his heart, suspended by the original bit of blue ribbon—to bestow much of his time on his companions,

though he gave more of it than before to Rachel, who knew his secret. To her he could speak without reserve of what he would not for worlds have named to any one else; and, apart from her own private motives, she had too much woman in her composition not to make the very best listener he could have chosen. To see Walter happy again was all she had desired, and that he was so now, everything assured her—even to the tones of his voice when he poured forth his melody in the cathedral choir. And this was natural enough. Had not some one praised his singing?

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE SAME COMPLAINT—UNDER A DIFFERENT ASPECT.

“VERMEIL, CONFISEUR”—and as he always added, in conversation with his customers, “*artiste en tout ce qui concerne les sucreries*”—a wide field for the exercise of the confectioner’s genius!

Adolphe Vermeil, of the Rue des Carmes, held by general consent the proud position of *premier confiseur* of Rouen. No banquet in the city, whether at the archbishop’s palace, the prefect’s hotel, or at the head-quarters of the general commanding the district, was considered complete unless it exhibited specimens of Monsieur Vermeil’s art. He could model you with equal facility a cathedral of spun sugar, a temple of justice in sponge-cake, or a battery of artillery in chocolate; such things were mere *bêtises* to Monsieur Vermeil, who triumphed most when he soared into the region of allegory, and was called upon to commemorate a birth, a wedding, or a victory. There were very few of the Pagan deities, none of the cardinal virtues, and hardly any of the great names of France whom he had not, at one time or other, introduced into his devices, in the most ravishing and surprising way: so much so, that it was difficult for the spectators—as he averred—to decide between astonishment and delight!

Monsieur Adolphe Vermeil was a very portly, dark-

browed man, in the prime of life, who looked portlier and darker from the fact of his being always attired in white, from the cotton cap on his head to the calfskin slippers on his feet. This, at least, was his *costume de service*, and he was very seldom seen in any other. His manner was grave—as befitted one whose mind was constantly occupied with great, let me add, with sublime ideas—but he was, notwithstanding, a very good-natured fellow. His domestic establishment consisted of wife, son, and daughter, these two children sufficing—with his fame—to represent himself and Madame Vermeil to posterity. A multiplicity of olive-branches is seldom the desire of French parents. Madame Vermeil was not so grave, but quite as good-tempered, as her husband; indeed, her appearance—or there is no truth in outward show—denoted her disposition, for she was as round and rosy and pleasant to the eye as a ripe Normandy pippin, and when she laughed, which was her frequent custom, it was difficult—as you beheld her sparkling eyes, white teeth, and dimpled cheeks—to resist the infection of her gaiety. Of the children of Monsieur and Madame Vermeil, the boy, Jules—about the same age as our friend Walter—was the elder, there being the difference of a year between him and Cécile-Marguerite-Olympe, his sister.

Addicted to habits of study and observation, not so much of books or men, but rather of the objects connected with his own immediate calling, Monsieur Vermeil had discovered that his insular neighbours, our countrymen, knew nothing of the noble science in which he had gathered so many laurels. He was chiefly assured of this fact by never having seen any confectionary that bore an English name, and, as his tendencies were eminently philanthropic, he inwardly resolved, in a kind of missionary spirit, to propagate a knowledge of his art and spread his fame amongst the benighted islanders. With this end in view, and having destined his son to follow his own profession and disseminate his system, it became necessary that Jules should speak English, and Monsieur Perrotin's advertisement catching his eye, he applied to that distinguished professor, who very readily undertook the task of perfecting the youth in the desiderated tongue.

Monsieur Perrotin's general custom was to teach at his



pupils' own homes, but there were sometimes exceptions, and in the case of Jules Vermeil it was found more convenient to all parties that the lessons should be given at the teacher's. One of the first consequences of this arrangement was the striking-up of an acquaintance between Jules and Walter, which soon became an intimate friendship, and it is probable that the French boy learned more from his companion than from the professor. He, at all events, acquired a greater facility in speaking—that is to say, he never hesitated about the choice of words, and his pronunciation was certainly improved—though the idiom remained a stumbling-block which he tried in vain to get over. He caught at Walter's colloquial phrases, but when it became necessary for him to think in English, he resorted to the ordinary process of translation, and as a matter of course—to speak familiarly—he made a hash of it. Perhaps Walter would have cut no peculiar figure as a French scholar had the circumstances been reversed, but living amongst the people made all the difference. Jules Vermeil's imperfections, however, went by unperceived, for Walter did not care to be critical, and Monsieur Perrotin was really surprised at his pupil's progress, which he ascribed altogether to his own marvellous faculty for teaching, so that the young confectioner soon grew into the conceit of having mastered all the difficulties of the English language; and this belief was readily adopted by his parents, who looked upon their son as a perfect prodigy.

The intimacy between the two boys had subsisted for several months at the period of Lady Tunstall's visit to Rouen, but owing to Walter's repeated absence from home, as related in the last chapter, their intercourse had latterly been interrupted. Jules had often called on his friend without seeing him, but on the day after the explanation with Rachel he was more successful.

"Ole fello," said Jules, accosting Walter in English, which he always spoke with him until driven to a standstill, "it is a good thing for me I find you here. There is a long time I have been at you, but you were not. Come and walk yourself with me, I have something to say."

Linked together, with their arms round each other's waists, a fashion taught by Jules, the friends strolled into

the country, and, after climbing Saint Catherine's Hill, which overlooks the fair Norman city, sat down on the turf to talk.

"And what has happened, Jules, since I saw you last?" asked Walter, beginning the conversation.

"Ah, happened, my dear, there is much! Was you ever amorous of somebody?"

If Jules had looked in Walter's face while he was speaking, an answer in words would have been needless, but his eyes were fixed on the glittering cathedral vane, and he did not notice his friend's embarrassment. Moreover, he did not wait for an answer.

"Because," he went on, "I shall tell you what it is, ole fellō. I love a gal. But how she is pretty—my God!"

"Indeed," said Walter, recovering himself; "who is she?"

"Her name is Séraphine. A fine one, is it not?"

"Very," replied Walter. "Where did you see her?"

"Hear one instant. I cross one day the market in the cathedral's face, when, just as I turn the corner of the Great Port Street, I meet the most beautiful gal of the world. She carry a small basket with some fruits. I smile to her, and she the same to me; in that way we part. Another day or two afterwards I meet her in the Place of the Maid—the market of calves, you know him; I make to her a fine reverence, and once more she smile. Then we begin to speak. I would know her dwelling in order to have the honour to present myself at her. What I ask she refuse to tell, in spite of my insistence. While we are talking she suddenly become troublesome, and say she must go. I try to get hold of her hand, but she snatch him away, and leave me planted there. I look round and perceive I am watched of a *gendarme*, so also I depart. After that, *je ne fais que rôder partout*, I spy all over to see her again. In the end I am fortunate. I discover her with a tub of water on her head walking away from the fountain of the stone cross in the Carrefour St. Vivien; but she is not alone, two more gals are with her, and her look tell me I must be silent. That, however, shall not prevent me from seeing where she enter. It is not a grand house, certainly, but what makes that? In definitive, I wait till she come out alone; then I say some

words, not many, for again the *gendarme*, of whom she is frightful, show his figure, and I to retire. This unluckiness works me greatly. I resolve upon a plot, and write to her a letter. You like to know, old fellō, what I say?"

"Very much indeed," said Walter, who was greatly entertained at his friend's love adventure.

Jules took out his pocket-book, and, unfolding a piece of paper, put it in Walter's hand. It was, of course, in French, but this is the translation:—

"MY DEAR MADEMOISELLE,—It is very annoying not to know your name, but I hope soon to be acquainted with it—shall I not? In the mean time you will permit me to call you by that name so sweet, of *dearest*! You cannot imagine the happiness which you made me feel yesterday evening in the short conversation which we had together, when that horrible *gendarme* disturbed us! I perhaps appeared to you a little awkward, but you must forgive me, for it was your charms that paralyzed all my faculties. Shall I have the happiness of seeing you again to-day? Say yes, I beg of you, and if you desire it I will be at the fountain where you are in the habit of drawing water, at half-past nine in the evening. Accept this small present, which is indeed a trifle, but at least it is an evidence of my affection until I have the happiness of beholding you. I conclude by embracing you—alas! on paper only, but I hope I shall soon do so *au naturel*.

"Yours, with all my heart,

"JULES."

"And what was the present you gave her? A ring?" asked Walter.

Jules looked a little confused as he replied:

"No—not exactly. It was a paper of *prâlines, couleur de rose*."

"Oh, pink sugared-almonds. From the shop?"

"Precisely. I must tell you, ole fellō, I have not yet much pocket-money, so I cannot afford to buy a ring! But soon I hope my affairs will go better."

"At all events you gave what you could. What did she say?"

"Say? She open the paper and put them in her mouth three at a time: she eat them all up at once."

"Before she read the letter?"

"Faith, yes. For, to tell you the truth, ole fellō, she knows not yet to read."

"Where did you see her that time?"

"Again at her door, where I ambush myself. Then, as she reads not, I retire my letter explaining the contents. Tell me, ole fellō, what ought to do a gal when she receive a declaration of love?"

"Upon my word, I don't know. I never made one."

Notwithstanding the disclaimer, Walter conjured up a scene in his mind's eye, and sighed softly. He could have told Jules what he imagined, but he did not.

"Is it likely she laugh?"

Walter had his doubts, but would not impart them. He answered evasively,

"When people are pleased, you know, they always laugh."

"That I think," returned Jules. "Well, then, Séraphine laugh with all her force."

"What age is she?" asked Walter.

"Of a fine age. I doubt not that she has eighteen."

"Old enough to be married."

"Ah—yes—perhaps."

"But you are two years younger. You don't think of marrying yet, do you, Jules?"

"That depends. If my parents object not, I marry when I like."

"But you must ask them first?"

"Yes; that is the law. It is declared so in Article CLXX. of the Code Napoléon."

"Suppose they should object?"

"Ah, that shall not be. *En attendant*, we make love."

"And what does Séraphine say? Will she have you?"

"I have not demanded of her. But to-night I do so."

"To-night. Where are you to meet her?"

"At the fountain I mention already. I will that you see her also. Come, ole fellō, and see me making love to this pretty gal. Not so?"

"Oh, if you wish it," replied Walter, "with great pleasure."

It was thereupon settled that as soon as it was dusk Walter should join his friend at a place specified, and for the present they separated—Jules to triumph in imagination at his conquest, and Walter to meditate on her who sent him the cameo.

"I couldn't set about it as Jules does," said Walter to himself. "I suppose it is because, after all, I'm not a Frenchman."

At the hour named, Walter was punctual to his appointment, and found Jules waiting for him. Although he was to meet his mistress by twilight, Jules was attired in his best clothes, and wore a new pair of white kid gloves, without which no Frenchman, young or old, ever makes love, or, indeed, does anything else that he thinks of importance. Moreover, he was perfumed to the last degree with *fleur d'orange*, which, as Walter rightly guessed, also came from his father's shop. Jules had, in fact, to a certain extent, defrauded a dish of *meringues* of their destined flavour. He was quite radiant at the thoughts of his *bonnes fortunes*, and hurried Walter away as fast as he could to the Carrefour St. Vivien. Arrived there, the two boys ensconced themselves beneath a dark archway and waited, conversing only in whispers.

Nine o'clock sounded from the cathedral tower, St. Ouen took up the chime, St. Maclou followed closely, St. Patrice and other churches mingled in the strain, and when they had all ended, the belfry of the gate-house in the Rue de la Grosse Horloge rang out the Norman curfew which the Conqueror visited upon England. Before it was quite silent, Jules pressed Walter's arm and pointed to the opposite side of the *carrefour*, where a female figure was approaching. There was light enough to discern a tall girl, in peasant costume, holding by the handle one of those narrow-topped tubs in which the Rouen women carry water. She drew near the fountain, and placing the vessel under a spout, looked round and coughed slightly. It was the signal agreed upon with Jules, who stepped lightly from his place of concealment and went towards her, having cautioned Walter not to stir. What followed must be told as Walter saw it.

As the rays of a neighbouring lamp fell upon the damsel's

face, his first impression was that Jules had decidedly understated the age of Séraphine. In Walter's eyes she appeared a woman of at least five-and-twenty—handsome, after a certain type, but not exactly the person he had fancied from his friend's description: if her waist had been more slender, and her bare arms a trifle thinner, she would have pleased him better; a softer voice, too, would, in Walter's opinion, have been an improvement. The greeting seemed to be a very cordial one, and it was evident to Walter that Jules had resorted to his original specific, for he saw Séraphine carry her hand to her mouth and drop a paper, which he doubted not had been filled with *bonbons*: indeed, a sort of impediment in Séraphine's speech made him sure this was the case. Then there was conversation with much gesticulation on the part of Jules, who appeared to be making advances, which the maiden coyly—perhaps it would be more accurate to say briskly—repelled. In the mean time the gurgling water indicated that the tub had overflowed, and with a hasty “*Mon Dieu!*” Séraphine stooped down, and, displaying considerable agility in the act, lifted the vessel on her head. She stood still for a moment to balance her freight, and this appeared to afford an opportunity for which Jules had probably been waiting, as he went nearer to her and passed one arm round her waist.

It is most likely he would have secured the kiss he sought, but for a slight circumstance which then occurred. From out the deep shadow cast by the broad and lofty stone cross issued the figure of an armed man—that is to say, of a *gendarme*, in boots and cocked hat—who, as Jules approached Séraphine, stood close behind her. Jules's face was pressing upwards; but at that instant a gruff voice exclaimed, “*Veux-tu, p'tit gredin!*” and down came a flood of water from the tilted tub on the head of the amorous youth, who was carried with it to the ground. Screaming with inextinguishable laughter, the damsel seized the empty vessel and ran away, the *gendarme* clattering after her.

Before Walter could reach him, Jules rose too—a malediction worthy of a full-grown Frenchman escaped his lips—he capered strangely for a moment, and then, hatless, and with

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outstretched arms, rushed from the *carrefour* as fast as his legs could carry him.

Though scarcely able to run for laughing, Walter followed, calling every now and then for Jules to stop, but the excited boy paid no attention; he dashed through the Rue des Carmes, passed his own door without looking at it, took the first turning that led in the direction of the quay, and tore down it with headlong speed.

"Where on earth is he going?" said Walter. "I must try and catch him."

With these words he put his best leg foremost, and the race became more equal, the distance between the two gradually diminishing. But to have prevented Jules from accomplishing his object, Walter must have run a great deal faster. He was still some twenty yards behind, when Jules, emerging from the street, arrived on the quay. Once there, he neither turned to right nor left, but crossed it in half a dozen bounds, and then, with an unintelligible cry, plunged into the Seine.

It was well for Jules Vermeil that night that the moon shone brightly, and that Walter was an excellent swimmer. He never for a moment hesitated to follow his friend, but jumped into the river also, and so well had he calculated the distance, that at the second stroke Walter was within arm's length of the foolish boy as he rose unconscious to the surface. Jules wore his hair long, and Walter seizing it with his right hand, drew him round and struck out for the shore. It was as much as he could do to reach it, but the effort was successful, and he landed his prize.

Great was the commotion on the quay, for there were many people about, and it was soon known that Jules Vermeil, the son of the great confectioner, was the object of their solicitude. While still insensible, he was carried to the Rue des Carmes, and when Walter had seen him fairly housed, he pushed through the crowd, and ran, dripping, home.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## IMMORTALITY.

THAT plunge in the Seine cured Jules Vermeil of his passion for Séraphine Lebigre—for it was the eldest daughter of the fruiterer of the Place de la Cathédrale, affianced to a *gendarme* of her father's *corps*, who had enthralled the young confectioner. He was deeply grateful to Walter for rescuing him from the river, and little less so for his silence respecting the cause of his attempted self-extinction, which thus passed for an accident. The same feeling influenced all the Vermeil family, each of them giving it characteristic expression. Mademoiselle Cécile-Marguerite-Olympe at once converted Walter into a hero,—her mother opened her heart to the "*brave garçon*" as to a second son,—and Monsieur Vermeil, the least demonstrative of the three, laboured with a deep and secret purpose.

For several successive days after the event, the *confiseur* was to be seen, at a very early hour, walking on the quay near the spot where the presumed accident occurred, now stopping to gaze upon the river, then moving hastily on again, sometimes muttering to himself, and anon tapping his forehead, at one moment with a troubled aspect, at another with a countenance smiling and serene, so that a stranger observing him might very fairly have supposed that the city of Rouen had given birth to a second Pierre Corneille, and that the high classic drama was once more on the eve of revival. These morning promenades ceased at last, and Monsieur Vermeil disappeared from public view,—it may be said from private view also, for he shut himself up so closely, that, except to his own household, he became completely invisible.

This seclusion continued for three whole weeks, during which it was noticed by the *habitues* of the Rue des Carmes that the *confiseur's* shop no longer exhibited that novelty and variety for which it had hitherto been so renowned. They saw with dissatisfaction the same eternal *croquignolles*,

the same *mirlitons*, the same *fanchonnettes*, the same *madelaines*, as wearisome to the eye as perpetual virtue without a flaw is to the generality of minds. They even got tired of looking at Monsieur Vermeil's latest invention—a beautiful stuffed *colibri* with glittering plumage, guarding its sugareggs in a sugar nest, surrounded by the loveliest little sugarflowrets on a ground of green sugar—which had created so extraordinary a sensation at the *jour de l'an*. As to the chocolate Cupids with silver wings and gilded bows and arrows, standing tiptoe on crystal columns, they were voted quite an eyesore. “Rien de nouveau—absolument rien!” was the daily exclamation of everybody as they shrugged their shoulders and passed on. The sameness was becoming a positive calamity, and people began to whisper to each other that something must have gone wrong with Monsieur Vermeil. His reputation was decidedly at stake, and already some were hardy enough to institute comparisons between the prince of *confiseurs* and his rival, Monsieur Decanteloup, of the Rue des Beguines, who in reality was not able to hold a candle to him; but this is the way that men of genius are turned round upon—be they ministers, generals, authors, artists—when once they cease to live for the public. It is so easy to say, “Toupin vaut bien Marotte.”

For three weeks, we repeat, this state of affairs existed; had it gone on for a month, the fame of Monsieur Vermeil would have been totally eclipsed, but he saved himself just in time. By degrees it got noised abroad that there was a very good reason for Monsieur Vermeil's apparent inaction: he had been engaged, it was said, on a work of art which was destined to outshine all his former productions—his *magnum opus* was achieved. In what it consisted nobody exactly knew, and therefore every one gave currency to his own authentic version, but all agreed on one point—that it was something of which the capital of Normandy might well be proud; it was another claim on the part of France to the admiration of the world. The ex-premier was at once reinstated in public opinion, and Monsieur Decanteloup subsided into his original obscurity.

And what, in reality, was the secret which Monsieur Vermeil had so carefully guarded?

He disclosed it at a banquet, to which he invited about

twenty of his most intimate friends—a large number for intimacy, perhaps even a large number for what is generally called friendship.

After what had happened to Jules, it followed, as a matter of course, that all who were connected with Walter were invited on the occasion. Invitations were therefore sent to Monsieur and Madame Perrotin, to the Abbé Ramier, and to Monsieur Cantagrel, but not to Madame Gembloux—an omission which thenceforth added the whole Vermeil family to the list of her proscribed.

“As if,” she said to Madame Lebigre, in her bitterest vein—“as if the widow of an officer of the Church were not good enough for the wife of a *marmiton* in a cotton night-cap! A *gouvernante*, Madame Lebigre, is not a *servante*; she belongs to society like others; she is not to be found day and night behind the counter, selling *brioches* to every comer for a paltry *sou* apiece; she has a position, Madame Lebigre. And they think, perhaps, that I know nothing about that business in the river—I, who have heard it all from you, who had it from your daughter’s lips. I am like those of Saint Mâlo: I comprehend with half a word. Such news was made to travel. Yes, I will hold my tongue when three Thursdays come together. Nor for the world would I be present at this most ridiculous fête, to which even Monsieur Dufourmantelle, the hotel commissioner, is invited—one who is, indeed, a *domestique*!”

“Ah!” rejoined Madame Lebigre, who had a proverb ready for everything, “if there’s a good pear in the orchard the pig gets it.”

“You are right, Madame Lebigre. Such pigs are to me an abhorrence!”

It was true what Madame Gembloux had said: the commissioner—who had not only made his peace with Walter, but been received into great favour by him, nobody need be told why—was amongst the guests of Monsieur Vermeil. The rest are unknown to the reader; but if he is curious about name and station, we will introduce them. Besides those whom we have mentioned, there were: Monsieur Bellegueule, the *pharmacien*, and his wife; Monsieur Gobert, the proprietor of the Café de la Comédie; Monsieur Hauteœur, the distinguished *artiste en cheveux*; Madame

Dardespinne, the fashionable *modiste*, and her two daughters; Monsieur Galempoix, the *commissaire-priseur*; Monsieur Finot, the notary; Messieurs Poixblanc, Baudribos, and Cocardon, all three *négociants*; Monsieur Lenoir, of the *cabinet de lecture*; Monsieur and Madame Joly, of the *Bains publics*; and Monsieur Corminbœuf, the editor of the *Blagueur Normand*, the most widely-circulated newspaper in the department.

From the distribution of the guests at table, with Walter placed on the right hand of Madame Vermeil, it was evident to all, if they had not presupposed it, that the fête was given in his honour. But if any specialty marked the arrangements, it was nowhere visible on entering the *salle-à-manger*, unless indeed a somewhat gorgeous display of scarlet and white drapery at one end of the room suggested something of the sort. In all other respects, it was simply a good dinner that awaited the company; and the company, one and all, seemed in the very best cue for doing justice to it. It is not necessary to give the bill of fare: the best dinner on paper—even that of Camacho the rich, which Sancho so thoroughly enjoyed—is a tantalising thing to read of. Let us imagine the *entrées*, and be sure that there was plenty of champagne to loosen the tongues of the joyous party, the merriest person there being Madame Vermeil—the gravest, but not the least happy, her inventive husband.

But where are the proofs of this invention so constantly and so highly extolled?

Wait a moment, and you shall see.

The substantial part of the banquet is over, there are only full bottles and empty glasses on the board, and Monsieur Vermeil is on his legs.

“Il va porter un toast!” whispers Monsieur Corminbœuf to his neighbour Madame Bellegueule—“he is going to propose a health, and I shall take a note of his speech: to-morrow you will read it in the *Blagueur Normand*!”

Monsieur Vermeil coughs away a little embarrassment, a sudden silence falls on the company, and all eyes are turned towards him as he stands, with the scarlet and white drapery forming a background that brings him out in bold relief. Let me mention, before he opens his lips, that he is

on this occasion attired in solemn black, and if he only had a bell in his right hand, might be mistaken for the President of the Chamber of Deputies, an institution which, we believe, existed at that time in France, and perhaps—— But let us avoid political prophecy, though the ridiculous impossibility of to-day is very often a serious fact to-morrow.

Monsieur Vermeil speaks :—

“Messieurs et dames,” he says—his oratory inclining to the gesticulative or *saltimbanque* school—“there are happy moments in the lives of all of us. In a career which has been devoted to the Fine Arts, I have known many such, for the approbation of my fellow-citizens has never been wanting to reward my efforts. (Marks of adhesion from Messieurs Bellegueule and Corminbœuf.) But a cold intelligence is not that which alone suffices. While we are artists we are also men. It is when the heart assists the head that we obtain our finest triumphs! (Sensation.) An event has lately occurred in Rouen which narrowly failed to carry desolation into the bosom of my family. (Madame Vermeil’s eyes are moistened, and Madame Dardespinne and her two daughters only wait the signal to use their embroidered handkerchiefs.) That peril was averted by a grand, a sublime courage. (The look is not to be translated which Mademoiselle Cécile-Marguerite-Olympe casts upon Walter, while a murmur of applause goes round the table.) A noble devotion restored to the arms of a mother an only son! (Here Madame Vermeil’s tears come down in a pearly shower, and a general *attendrissement* prevails.) All honour to the saviour of my child! (Walter becomes greatly confused, and wishes himself at the bottom of the Seine—anywhere to escape an ovation.) All honour to the great science of natation! (Unequivocal tokens of assent on the part of Monsieur and Madame Joly, of the *Bains publics*.) But on the part of a father who, besides that, is something, there is more than gratitude to be paid. History claims her share in the transaction. (The distinguished journalist, Monsieur Corminbœuf, personifies History in an approving nod.) It is no longer an egotism of Art, but a sacred duty, by which I am inspired. To that I listen: saying to myself—‘Vermeil, this must be

recorded!' I give myself up to study; I examine the question in all its bearings; I resolve by a supreme effort to efface all my former works; I accomplish——this."

It had not been perceived by those present; but while Monsieur Vermeil was speaking he had managed to get hold of the cord which confined the drapery behind him, and as he uttered the last words he darted on one side and gave it a sudden twitch; the curtains separated in the centre, and the subject of his labours stood revealed.

On a large table covered with a snow-white cloth, which hung in gaily ornamented festoons all round, was a device which fully accounted for the absence of novelty from Monsieur Vermeil's shop window. It represented the river Seine taking its course at the feet of the city of Rouen, which rose in great majesty above the quays, with all its spires and towers—as many of them, at least, as Monsieur Vermeil had found time to introduce. The suspension-bridge, the public baths, the promenade, the hotels, the factory chimneys, the distant shipping, the intermingling foliage, were all set forth with a verisimilitude which only painted pie-crust and spun sugar could produce. All the population of Rouen were there too, in coloured chocolate, every one with arms uplifted in admiration of a gallant deed just enacted in the turbulent waters of the Seine, the actors in which, to distinguish them from the crowd, were modelled in the nude: pink figures, two in number, with streaming brown hair, one on the other's shoulders, issuing from the water. On the quay above there was a tribune or platform of crimson, where stood Joan of Arc, in a purple tunic and silver armour, with a panoply of feathers in her helmet, a silver spear in her left hand, and a wreath of golden laurel in her right. At her feet was the *Cog Gaulois*, with open beak in full crow, and over her head, at the back of the tribune, waved the tricolour of France and the Union Jack of England! In front of the tribune was inscribed, in letters of gold,—

"RECOMPENSE DE LA VERTU!"

—a motto remarkable alike for originality and felicity of application.

They must have been stern critics, indeed, who could look upon this display of artistic skill without approving com-

ment. None such were to be found amongst the company assembled at Monsieur Vermeil's. On the contrary, it was asserted by Monsieur Corminbœuf, and unanimously agreed to by all present, that never before had France so successfully vindicated her claim to glory; and this idea he expanded the next day into a splendid article in the *Blagueur Normand*, in which he took occasion to hurl in the teeth of Europe, and particularly in the teeth of perfidious Albion, a recapitulation of every French victory since Clovis won the battle of Tolbiac.

Monsieur Vermeil's handiwork, however, procured him something more than the admiration of his townsmen. On the recommendation of the prefect of the department, the king of the French—who never threw away a decoration—rewarded him with the Legion of Honour!

He prized the decoration, without doubt, because it was a public recognition of his services; he thought, however, that it was only his due, and perhaps he thought that for particular acts there should be a particular recompense, to distinguish the *élite* from the crowd. Some men take pride in winning battles, some in framing treaties, some in composing *sonatas*, some in leaping over hurdles—all have their laudable objects of ambition. Monsieur Vermeil also had his. If the alternative had been set before him to renounce the merit of that invention or give back the decoration, he would unhesitatingly have relinquished the latter. But as this sacrifice was not demanded of him, the much-coveted distinction glittered on his breast even in the midst of his culinary occupations, and he justified the proceeding by this observation: "It was here I gained the cross: it is just that I should wear it here!"

No man, however, not even a confectioner, has his cup all filled with sweets; he, too, is subject to the universal law, and the bitter drop was poured for Monsieur Vermeil by Madame Gembloux.

Wherever she went, and her peregrinations extended far and wide, she related the love adventure of Jules Vermeil with Séraphine Lebigre, just as it occurred—that is to say, by telling the tale with every malicious addition she could think of, to heighten its effect.

We have seen that Monsieur Vermeil was a man of many



friends—but no number of friends can prevent the circulation of scandal: it is, indeed, just possible that the greater this kind of affluence the more the scandal spreads! I would not accuse either Monsieur or Madame Bellegueule, but they both had tongues; nor Monsieur Hauteœur, who while dressing the hair of his numerous *pratiques*, was sometimes at a loss for a subject to entertain them with; nor Madame Dardespinne and her two daughters, who were not always occupied in making dresses, but occasionally unmade a reputation; nor Monsieur Corminbœuf, in whose journal nothing but facts appeared; but notwithstanding the friendship of these and other intimates, before long the unlucky story was in every one's mouth, and that which, in the first instance, had been pure, unadulterated glory, began at last to savour of something like shame. Monsieur Vermeil had taxed his ingenuity to record an event which perpetuated the remembrance of a folly—so far, at least, as his own son was concerned.

He accordingly came to a conclusion which had its influence upon more than one of the personages whose history is here narrated.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### A LIKENESS.

MIDWAY between the antique cities of Chiavari and Rapallo, on that beautiful shore which takes its name from the rising sun, there stands a villa which was built about the middle of the last century, by a member of the noble and once-powerful house of Lavagna. He was a person of great taste, and so embellished his dwelling with every appliance of art, that nothing fairer to the eye was to be seen in all Italy. He lived here long, and here he thought to have ended his days, but the French Revolution, or its consequences, found him out even in this quiet retreat, from whence he was driven, in his old age, to die in a foreign land, while the treasures which he had accumulated became the spoil of the French soldiery. In after years the estate

was recovered by the family of the rightful owner, but he who succeeded to it found little more than bare walls at the Villa Lavagna, and, being sorely straitened for money, sold it to a rich innkeeper at Genoa, who, viewing his purchase in the light of a speculation, laid out a large sum of money in restoring the house and making it again habitable.

Seeking a place of rest, after much wandering, and still undesirous of returning to England, Lord and Lady Deepdale turned aside from their route to see if the Villa Lavagna at all answered the description given of it in Galignani's newspaper. For once an advertisement spoke the truth; the villa had everything in its favour as a residence, and the beauty of the situation could not be surpassed. The Genoese innkeeper asked a very long price, but Lord Deepdale did not question his terms for a moment, his only thought being for Edith.

Tranquil and, to all appearance, content with her lot, she was never joyous. The past, of which her husband knew nothing, was always present to her memory. Again and again, when urged by him to say what he could do to make her happy, she had been tempted to tell the whole story of her early and abiding sorrow; but she was always withheld from doing so by thinking that his affection for her demanded a different requital. Better that she should suffer in silence than run the risk of embittering all his future life! Had children been given to her, the void in her heart might have been partly filled, but in their absence, with nothing to replace the lost one, that had breathed, as she believed, but for a moment, she could not be comforted. Yet there was an instinctive yearning in Edith's bosom towards every child she saw, and while Mary Tunstall had been near her during a visit of a few months which Lord Deepdale and herself had paid to her sister Agatha at Frascati, she had experienced more real happiness than perhaps she had ever known. But after the departure of Sir James and Lady Tunstall for England, the old thoughts returned, and she became languid and listless as before. To charm away this frame of mind, Lord Deepdale again tried change of scene, and if happiness depended on external objects, it seemed most likely to be met with where Edith had now consented to remain.

Nestled amid groves of orange and pomegranate, and backed by olive-woods that climbed the steep at the base of which it stood, with the aloe and palm-tree growing in richest luxuriance on the margin of the blue Mediterranean, which stretched away in front till it blended with the shadowy outline of the far-distant Maritime Alps, while on either hand projected the thickly-wooded promontories of Sestri and Porto Fino, the Villa Lavagna was surrounded by all that is beautiful in nature. The gardens, too, were exquisitely laid out; sparkling fountains scattered their spray on rich *parterres* of glowing flowers, broad trellised vines and umbrageous fig-trees afforded shelter from the noontide heat, and vases and statues of purest white stood out in sharp relief at every opening of the long avenues of cypress and immortal laurel.

It was impossible for Edith to resist the influence of the spot, and Lord Deepdale began to hope that at last she had found what had so long been wanting.

Though estranged from her mother, and of a totally different temperament from her sister, Edith's recent visit to Frascati had brought about a nearer intercourse than had subsisted between Agatha and herself since the time when they were girls together. Lady Tunstall was worldly, and though her present fortune was ample and her future inheritance large, she coveted Lady Deepdale's share in the Scrope property, which was entirely at her own disposal. Edith was childless, and there appeared little likelihood of her ever being a mother. It was desirable, then, to draw the family tie as close as possible, and encourage by every means the fondness of Edith for her niece. For this reason, whenever Agatha wrote to Lady Deepdale there was always an enclosure from Mary Tunstall. Indeed, it might be said that Lady Tunstall's letters were her daughter's envelopes, so much fuller were the accounts given by the latter.

The first of these communications was received by Edith about a month after her arrival at the Villa Lavagna. It ran as follows :—

“MY DEAREST AUNT,—I cannot tell you how happy we all were to receive such a nice letter from you. Mamma

would have written herself long before—and so should I—if we had had any idea where you were to be found. And to think of your being, after all, in the very part which we admired so much, for I must tell you that we actually went past the spot where you now live, on our way from Pisa to Genoa, along the Riviera di Levante. You see I am quite a good geographer; I remember the names of all the places, not only where we stayed, but where we only slept, and I particularly recollect the scenery after passing Sestri, it was so excessively lovely. I see that the postmark of your letter is Chiavari, where we were so much struck by the piles of *chaises volantes*, so white and so delicately made, with which all the arcades of the town were crowded. And is there not a very steep road that winds through a chestnut forest when you get a little way from Chiavari, and then turns suddenly towards the sea again, and goes along a mountain ledge above the clear blue water, at which you get a peep every now and then exactly below you, only ever so far down, as well as the groves of orange and lemon-trees will let you? I think that road must go very near the Villa Lavagna, but I suppose the house can only be seen from the sea, as we merely got glimpses of roofs and chimneys except when we came upon a tall *campanile*, that stood out quite like a landmark, so high, so slender, and so graceful. I shall hope, dearest aunt, to have a better description from you than I can give, for I dare say, by this time, you have been as far as the Cima di Ruta, the view from which, *I think, is the very finest in all the world!* I shall go on, however, and tell you about our journey all the way to England.

“Before we reached the wonderful tunnel of the rocks at Ruta, we had been *for more than two hours getting through the largest forest I ever was in in my life*, and the courier told papa it was full of wild boars and all kinds of game, and I believe, if it had been the proper season, that papa would have stayed there to shoot them. You know mamma sketches beautifully, and while we changed horses, a little beyond the Cima, we went into the inn and sat on a terraced roof beneath a trellis, from which the clusters of young grapes were hanging, and there mamma drew the lovely view I spoke of, with the city of Genoa so bright in the

distance, and the village of Quinto, where the great Christopher Columbus was born, a good deal nearer on the right-hand side. I must say that I think the country near Genoa looks a great deal prettier when you are a good way off than when you get close to it, for there are no trees on the hills, and the glare is dreadful. The dust, too, upon the road, makes travelling here in summer quite disagreeable, and then the numbers of flies! I could hear the postilion calling out 'Mosche!' every minute, and when the horse he rode happened to stumble, which he did very often, he said, 'Bestia gambosche!' in such a spiteful tone, and beat him with his whip. I suppose 'gambosche' means something very dreadful, the man looked so fierce when he said it, but I can't find the word in my Italian dictionary.

"Genoa, dearest aunt, is not at all the kind of place that I should like to live in, the streets are so very, very narrow, not a bit better than lanes; and the houses, even the finest palaces, so tall that it makes your neck ache to look up at them. We drove to Castoldi's, in the Strada del Campo. It was formerly the Palazzo Raggio, belonging to a nobleman of that name, and now the landlord calls it 'Italy's Hotel.' We laughed a good deal at that when we read it on his card. Signor Castoldi's English—which he is very fond of speaking—is the funniest in the world, quite worth going to Genoa to hear. The bedrooms we were shown into were so large, that I asked if they were haunted, and Signor Castoldi, who was doing the honours, replied, 'No, miss, never no goats was in this chambers!' I found out that he meant ghosts. Was it not a most ridiculous mistake? I said I did not like the streets, but there is one of them, the Strada Orefici, where I could stay all day long looking at the exquisite ornaments in gold filagree, for which kind of workmanship the Genoese are famous. Papa bought me a pair of bracelets, the finest and lightest you ever saw. I am to wear them on my next birthday. The name of the maker is Antonio Gianué; they say he is the best in all Genoa. I also very much admire the large white veils which the ladies throw over their heads when they walk about, full dressed, in the middle of the day. Is not that a singular custom? Do you know, they make the largest bouquets in the world at Genoa—much too large for a lady to carry; the flowers are all placed in circles,

white first, then blue, then yellow, then red, and so on. It looks remarkable, but is not, in my opinion, near so pretty as what you buy in Paris.

"I was very glad when mamma decided upon leaving Genoa, for then we got into the mountains, which I so much prefer to the cities. We crossed the Apennines again, and descended into the plains of Lombardy, where, *for the first time in my life*, I saw rice growing! I always thought the plant had been something *very different*! At Turin, which is almost entirely surrounded by the Alps, *crowned with perpetual snow*, we were taken to the Hotel Trombetta, and had apartments that looked all over the great square in front of the king's palace, and the first thing I saw, when I went to the window, was a man *having his hair cut in the open air*! You have been to Turin, dearest aunt, so I shall not tell you anything about it, only papa was very much pleased with the *cafés*, and said he thought it the most livable place in Italy. For my own part, I thought it more beautifully situated than any other, and mamma said so too, so I am sure I was right. We had very fine weather for crossing Mont Cenis, and it required a great number of horses to draw our carriage; not near so many, however, as we saw dragging the diligence when it left Susa: papa counted no fewer than twenty, including mules! What do you think? I was not at all afraid of being overturned, though in some places we went quite close to the brink of *the most frightful precipices*. As for papa, he did not know anything about them, for he slept nearly all the way till we got into Savoy. We had a great deal of difficulty in getting rooms at Aix les Bains, the place being full of company, on which account we came away sooner than we intended. We did not go to Geneva, mamma having been there several times already, but crossed the lovely little lake of Bourget in a steamer, and landed at a small town on the French side of the Rhône, after the most curious voyage through the crooked outlet of the lake, where we were pulled along with ropes by people on the shore, to prevent us from running against the banks, the stream being so excessively narrow. We were greatly amused by a young Frenchman on board the vessel, who was dressed so uncommonly smart, in a lilac coat with bright blue glass buttons, and pink-striped

trousers, strapped tightly over fawn-coloured *bottines*, with shining black tips at the toes; he wore also a grey hat with a broad brim, and primrose kid gloves, which we saw him take from his pocket and put on as soon as the steamer left the quay, and he took them off directly we touched the shore again. There was a lottery on board, by which I should think the captain gained more than by the passage-money, for everybody took tickets; and though there were a great many prizes, nobody got one, owing, papa said, to the manner of drawing, which was so arranged as to make winning impossible. It was a very pretty girl who went round with the lottery, and she persuaded the young Frenchman to take a quantity of tickets. I should have mentioned that he made acquaintance with papa, and told him all his adventures ever since he was born. I don't know what they could have been, but they made papa laugh very much. He presented his card when he took leave, as he was going, he said, to Lyons. Such a fine card, and such a fine name! 'Apollon Desiré Criquebœuf, Chapelier, Gantier et Coiffeur.' Mamma said she supposed he must be related to the Three Graces!

"The journey to Paris was rather tiresome, but I have a good story to tell you of what occurred at Dijon. We slept in a very large hotel, and our bedroom windows overlooked an immense courtyard, in one side of which, near the *porte cochère*, was chained an enormous mastiff, the sort of animal called by the French a '*bouledogue*.' There was a church close to the hotel, and every time the clock struck the dog howled with all his might, so that it was almost impossible to get any sleep for him. In the morning, when papa went down, he sent for the landlord and mentioned the noise. Instead of an apology, or saying that he was sorry, the man's countenance brightened up, and he said: 'Ah, monsieur! j'espère que vous l'avez entendu à minuit! C'est alors qu'il est beau!' It was impossible for papa to scold him after that.

"It would take me too long to tell you all that we saw in wonderful Paris, so I must skip that part of our travels altogether, and hurry on to the last thing that happened on the journey, which was to me the pleasantest of all. It having been settled that we should embark at Havre, we took the lower road to Rouen, by way of Mantes and

Louviers, keeping the Seine in view a great part of the way. It was chiefly, however, to see the extraordinary churches and other buildings that we went to Rouen, and I cannot tell you, dearest aunt, how delighted I was with them all. Such exquisite Gothic architecture, such lovely painted glass, and then such enchanting singing at the cathedral. The choristers were magnificent; but there was one amongst them, who sang the *solo* parts, whose voice was the most delicious that mamma even, who, you know, is very critical, declared she had ever heard. As for me, I cried all the time, it was so lovely, and gave me such strange sensations; but how surprised you will be when I tell you that the singer was an English boy. I saw and spoke to him after the service was over, and he was quite as handsome as his voice was charming; and do you know, dearest aunt, it is very singular, but I never saw anybody so like another as he was to you, and papa also was struck by the resemblance. He had exactly your eyes and mouth, the same-shaped face and the same expression, but with a great deal more colour in his cheeks; his hair, too, was of the same shade of rich dark brown, and he wore it very long. Papa said he looked about sixteen: if not more, he was very tall for his age. The stupid commissioner could not remember his name, but told us he came to Rouen three or four years ago with a French person, a teacher of languages, who had married an Englishwoman. Although I did not see *them*, I cannot believe that he belongs to people of that condition, his air was so *noble*, and his manners *so very superior*. I must not forget to say that mamma did not see him; it was only papa and I,—and quite by chance. If I were with you, dearest aunt, I could tell you a great deal more than I am capable of writing. I wonder if I shall ever see him again! Kiss my uncle for me, and believe me your ever affectionate niece,

“MARY TUNSTALL.

“P.S.—We set out to-morrow for the north, on a visit to grand-mamma at Scargill Hall, and after a few days papa leaves us for the Highlands. We are to stay till he is tired of shooting grouse. Were you ever at Scargill?”

Lord Deepdale was from home when Edith received this letter: had he been by while she read it, the conflicting



emotions which it excited must have compelled her to an instantaneous disclosure of her secret. For several days she continued in a strange fever of excitement. At last she became calm, but when her husband came back he could not help noticing, though he said nothing, that a deeper shade of melancholy was on her brow.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### A DISCOVERY.

A WAYWARD spirit, deriving pleasure from painful sources, made Mrs. Scrope once more an inmate of Scargill Hall.

She had originally abandoned the place on account of its loneliness; greater reason existed afterwards for looking upon it with aversion; and yet she finally chose it for her principal abode, maintaining, however, but little intercourse with her neighbours, and living, for the most part, in solitary grandeur.

Mrs. Scrope's temperament was one which age did not soften. The aim of her life had been the possession of power; yet, despite her strong will and vast wealth, a weaker nature had thwarted her chief desire. The failure of the one great expectation had rendered all other successes valueless. With no son of her own, she was doubly disappointed by the result of her daughters' marriages: in the one instance, the heir was again a female; in the other,—ah, there was the bitter thought! If that boy had been Lord Deepdale's child, all would have been well; but as the offspring of a nameless man, she held it an alien to her blood. Notwithstanding her proud soul, there were moments of self-accusation. Had her severity towards Edith been less, the fountain of maternity might still have flowed; but in the dread hour when Edith heard the fatal words which proclaimed the death of her babe, its current was stopped for ever.

In placing Walter under the charge of one who, for the money she gave, would implicitly obey her instructions,

Mrs. Scrope exercised a secret influence over his destiny : if the boy died, so much the better,—she was released from all further care respecting him ; if, contrary to her hope, he lived till he was old enough to go to sea, his removal might easily be effected, and he would equally be lost sight of for ever. When, therefore, the account first reached her of Walter's disappearance, coupled with the intimation that Mr. Binks believed he was drowned, she felt an unwonted degree of satisfaction ; but when she saw that he only expressed his belief without asserting it as a fact, she could not rest until she had obtained all the proof which the circumstances of the case could afford. As we have already related, she immediately went down to Moorside ; but though the most active search was made, no tidings of Walter were obtained ; while, on the other hand, no evidence of his death appeared. In such a torrent as the Lune, broken by rocks and shallows, a dead body could not be carried far ; it must be caught by some eddy and thrown on the bank, or remain stranded in mid-stream,—and in either case its discovery was almost certain. But throughout the course of the river, from the mill-dam to its junction with the Tees, the peasants found only an empty sack which had been torn in its fall, but was nowhere stained. Once or twice a vague notion crossed Mrs. Scrope's mind that Rachel Loring, who, on the plea of ill-health, had just left her service, was somehow concerned in the business ; but the idea of her intervention subsided before the conviction that she could not, without assistance, execute such a project as that of carrying off the boy,—and who was there to render it ? Still the mystery in which Walter's fate was wrapped rendered her uneasy, and this discomfort was increased when she found on inquiry that none of Rachel's relations could give any clue to her present place of residence. For a time Mrs. Scrope occupied herself in endeavouring to discover where she had gone, her agent, Matthew Yates, whom we have seen at Scargill during Edith's illness, being well paid for travelling over England for that purpose ; but at last she gave up the attempt as hopeless. She did not go abroad again, but at the end of two or three years went down to live at Scargill.

Mrs. Scrope seldom wrote to Edith, but her correspond

ence with Agatha was frequent ; and when her favourite came to England, she accorded her as warm a reception as it was in her nature to give ; and, though little disposed to notice children, was won over by the beauty, liveliness, and innocence of her granddaughter to show her more than ordinary favour. By degrees this liking became affection—the stronger for its concentration in one particular direction—and before a month had gone by, Mary Tunstall became all-in-all with the imperious mistress of Scargill Hall. Agatha was surprised, but delighted, to observe her mother's *penchant*, and, as she had done with regard to Edith, encouraged it in every way. Her hope was to marry her daughter as highly as any heiress in the kingdom ; and, if she judged rightly, the same desire was at the bottom of Mrs. Scrope's predilection. Poor Mary, meantime, was moved by none of these ambitious dreams, though even at her age ambition finds room to grow ; dreams, indeed, she had, but they were associated with the simple happiness of loving.

As of that which the heart thinketh the mouth speaketh, so it came to pass that, in relating to her grandmother one day when they were walking together all that had befallen since she left Frascati, Mary Tunstall told in full detail the story of the youthful singer in Rouen cathedral. At first Mrs. Scrope lent merely a pleased attention, smiling at Mary's enthusiastic description of "the angelic voice ;" but when she spoke of the boy's extraordinary likeness to Lady Deepdale, a far different and more earnest feeling was awakened.

The words, "I thought my aunt's face was before me," sent a sudden pang to Mrs. Scrope's bosom, as if a dagger had been planted there. A likeness so strong as to have given birth to such a thought—what could it mean ? With an eagerness which Mary was quite at a loss to account for, Mrs. Scrope questioned her about the boy's age, his name, his parentage, his condition of life, and how he came to be there ? To these inquiries Mary could only reply as she had written to Lady Deepdale.

Mrs. Scrope listened in silence to every syllable that fell from her granddaughter's lips, but smiled no more at what she heard. When Mary had ended, she said, with assumed composure, that such resemblances were of common occur-

rence, and then turned the conversation. But she could not so readily dismiss the subject from her thoughts, neither did she wish to do so; and when alone in her chamber she closely considered it.

The problem she had to solve was this:—Who was this English boy, fifteen years of age, so strikingly like her own daughter—brought up abroad by a Frenchman, a teacher of languages, who had married in England? Quick suspicion led her rapidly to the right conclusion. He could be no other than Edith's son. The circumstance of Rachel's evasion almost at the very moment of Walter's disappearance, with the possibility of her marriage about the same time, afforded a strong presumption that she was one of the people with whom the boy was living. But who was the other? Mrs. Scrope reflected. A teacher of languages! The man's condition recalled a name forgotten for many years—Perrotin! The idiot to whom, in her folly, she had intrusted Edith on her journey to the north—the only person, besides Rachel, who was cognizant of her daughter's clandestine marriage! It was as clear as day. This Perrotin had found out Rachel, and together they had conspired to steal the boy—no doubt with the design of one day extorting a heavy sum for the suppression of his claims.

Mrs. Scrope opened a cabinet, and took from it a thick book with a lock, which she unfastened: she turned over the leaves till she came to a certain page, when she read a single entry:—

“June 24, 1831.”

“There was no need,” she muttered, “to write down the date of our dishonour! Can I ever forget the day? But it offers a written confirmation of the boy's age. Exactly fifteen. And here,” she continued, opening a paper that marked the place—“here is the certificate of the marriage! A pretty certificate! After all, it is only a copy from the register. But then the original is inaccessible to these people; they would never think of applying to see it; besides, they dare not come to England. I can reach *them*, notwithstanding. Shall I destroy these evidences of her shame? No—not yet, not yet.”

Mrs. Scrope replaced the paper in the book, which she

locked and returned to the cabinet. She then wrote the following letter:—

“SCARGILL HALL, *Monday*.

“MATTHEW YATES,—Immediately after receiving this, take the first train and come here to receive my instructions. I mean to send you abroad. “M. S.”

He to whom this peremptory message was sent lost not a moment in obeying it. He arrived at Scargill Hall on the day but one following, was closeted till late in the evening with his patroness, and then took his way back as speedily as he came.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN EMISSARY.

ON the afternoon of the fourth day following this interview, the steamer from Havre arrived at Rouen with its usual complement of passengers. Amongst them was an Englishman, who, with more than the usual taciturnity of his countrymen, had kept aloof from all on board, utterly indifferent to the beauty of the river scenery, and wrapt up in meditations which, to judge by the expression of his countenance, must have been anything but cheerful.

He was, indeed, a person of most unprepossessing appearance, with a thick neck, a bullet head, a forehead villanously low, a heavy brow, small, piercing grey eyes, a nose almost flat, a compressed mouth, and one cheek disfigured by a dark red seam, which had either been frightfully burnt or deeply gashed. His age might be about fifty-five, but, to judge by the squareness of his frame and the muscularity of his limbs, time had not yet diminished his strength. No inference as to his condition in life could be derived from his dress, which was plain, but respectable.

That it was not inability to speak French which had kept him silent, was evident from the few words he uttered on landing, when he called for the commissioner of the *Hôtel de l'Europe*. Monsieur Dufourmantelle, who was on duty on

the quay, at once stepped forward, and with many demonstrations of respect and much unnecessary declamation, conducted him to the house. On reaching it, the stranger, who seemed conversant with French customs, gave his keys to the commissioner and his passport to the landlord, said briefly that his name was Yates, and desired to be shown the best apartment that was vacant. The landlord was all smiles and bows.

"Did monsieur desire a *salon à part* besides a *chambre à coucher*?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then, there was one *au premier* which would exactly suit monsieur. It was called *l'appartement des Anglais*, because they always chose it. The view from the windows was superb. Monsieur would be delighted with the view."

Monsieur looked as if nothing in the world delighted him, and only returned an inarticulate growl.

"Would monsieur dine at the *table d'hôte*?"

"No."

"Ah! that was a pity, for it was the best in Rouen. The commandant and officers of the 7th Chevaux-Légers, several of the principal merchants—finally the first society, always dined there."

Good society seemed to have no charms for Mr. Yates. He growled again.

"Well, as monsieur pleased; but he (the speaker) would permit himself to make the observation that private dinners were much the most expensive."

"No matter. They must send up a good one, and as soon as they could."

The host shrugged his shoulders. Fond as his class are of swelling the amount of their bills, a French landlord would rather forego that opportunity than not commend his *table d'hôte*: his *amour propre* is stronger even than his self-interest. However, when they do yield in this matter, they know how to indemnify themselves for their complaisance.

We will suppose that Mr. Yates has dined to his satisfaction, and is sitting with a bottle of Burgundy before him, filling full, drinking what he fills, and, under the inspiration of the wine, thinking profoundly. There comes

a knock at the door. It is the commissioner—Dufourmantelle. He has brought monsieur's keys: nothing has been touched at the *Douane*, and monsieur's baggage is already in his bed-room. The commissioner desires to offer his services. It is a lovely evening—the environs of the town are beautiful—or, perhaps, monsieur would prefer the theatre: the actors are of the first force, it is the twenty-ninth representation of “*Le Neveu du Diable*,” a charming piece, which has had the most extraordinary run at the Porte St. Martin, in Paris—all Rouen flock nightly to assist at it.

Neither of these propositions are agreeable to Mr. Yates, but he is not indifferent to the attractions of the city. He understands that the *Maison de Santé* is on a very large scale. Could he see that?

Assuredly, is the commissioner's reply; but, unfortunately, not that evening; the hours for visiting that establishment are specified, and it can only be viewed with tickets. He shall have the honour of procuring one for monsieur the first thing in the morning. Was there no other amusement which monsieur would prefer for the moment?

Mr. Yates seems to reflect: that is to say, he takes another full glass, which empties the bottle, and does not return an immediate reply, while Dufourmantelle stands in an attitude of obsequious attention.

At last Mr. Yates speaks.

“You know the town, you say?”

“Every street, every house in it; almost every inhabitant.”

“In that case,” says Mr. Yates, slowly, “you probably are acquainted with a person of the name of Perrotin?”

“I regret to say I have not the honour of a personal acquaintance; but I am so fortunate as to be known to his wife.”

“That will do just as well. Whereabouts do they live?”

Dufourmantelle says that it is in the *Chemin aux Bœufs*, outside the Boulevards, between the *Cimetière La Gatte* and the *Cimetière Monumental*; not in the gayest part of the city.

This last observation does not affect Mr. Yates so unpleasantly as might perhaps have been expected. He

expresses a wish to see the locality, and the commissioner, only too happy to be employed, eagerly offers to be his guide. The offer is accepted, and Mr. Yates and his attendant leave the hotel together.

Whether the generous quality of the wine which he has drunk has rendered Mr. Yates more genial, or whether he is influenced by some secret motive, may be a doubtful question; but he is more disposed for conversation now than he seemed to be a few hours earlier. They pass in front of the cathedral, and, as a matter of course, his companion expatiates on its beauties. It is the hour of vespers. Would monsieur like to enter, just to hear the chanting of the evening hymn? No. Mr. Yates has no great fancy for sacred music, but asks if it is well executed; whereupon the commissioner waxes eloquent.

"It would be impossible, if France were traversed from east to west, from north to south, to hear anything half so magnificent as the service in Rouen cathedral! To make it perfect, it wants only that which it possessed a week ago. But, alas! there has been a sad misfortune, a great blow has been given to the choir, it may even be called a public calamity: the finest voice in Europe has become extinct!"

Mr. Yates casts a quick glance on the speaker, and a hideous smile flickers over his scarred face.

"Is the singer dead?" he asks, sharply.

"No, he lives and is quite well, but it comes to the same thing."

Mr. Yates impatiently demands how that can be?

"Monsieur will understand that I am speaking of a boy, gifted with the most ravishing organ! At a certain age it sometimes arrives that the larynx refuses any longer to perform its vocal functions. This is what occurred only last Sunday. In the midst of high mass that boy's voice suddenly broke down! At one moment the congregation were listening to the melody of the celestial spheres, in the next they tried in vain to persuade themselves that their ears had deceived them: a hoarse croaking, as of frogs, was the only sound they heard; that also presently ceased, and all was silent; the mass was finished in haste, and then the cause of this interruption was ascertained. Was I not right, monsieur, in calling it a public calamity?"



"He broke no blood-vessel, then?"

"Certainly not; but what was worse, his voice at that instant disappeared. For him to sing any longer has since been found impossible. What renders this circumstance of interest to you, monsieur, is, that the parents of the boy are those for whom you inquire?"

"Indeed!"

Mr. Yates and the commissioner continued their walk, threading the narrow streets of Rouen till they came to the *Chemin aux Bœufs*, by which time it was getting dusk. Monsieur Dufourmantelle pointed out the house they were seeking, and asked if he should go first and announce Mr. Yates.

"No," was the reply, "I can announce myself when the time comes. Remain here while I take a look at the place."

Monsieur Perrotin's dwelling was one of very modest pretensions. It stood with its high pointed gable towards the road, a flight of three or four steps led up to the door, and a broad window filled the rest of the lower floor, the ledge of which was raised about five feet from the ground, so that a man of ordinary height could just see into the room from the outside without obstructing the light. This facility for observation seemed to have struck Mr. Yates, who, instead of ascending the steps, drew close up to the window, took off his hat, and peeped over the ledge. A lamp was burning, which enabled him to observe the occupations of those within. At a table on which the lamp stood, an elderly man was writing, whose salient features were seen in profile; near him, and directly opposite the window, sat a boy with a book in his hand; and moving about the room, a female figure occupied herself with some domestic arrangements. The man and the boy were strangers to Mr. Yates; he cast on each of them a searching look, nor withdrew it till he had fixed their countenances in his memory; he then turned his eyes on the woman; and, although fifteen years had gone by since last he saw her, recognized her at a glance; for Mr. Yates was one whose peculiar faculty—well exercised by his professional pursuits—consisted in never forgetting a person he once had met.

"My lady's information," he said to himself, "was right; but it's seldom she makes a mistake. I felt sure I was sent

on no fool's errand. So, that's pretty Rachel Loring that was; pretty enough now, for that matter, but older! How afraid she used to be of my wife; and of me, too, whenever I came across her! I don't much wonder at it; for making things pleasant to people is not altogether in our line. The old chap is her husband, of course; and the boy—ay, you've no need to look up, young feller, I shall remember you as long as I live—you're the son of our patient; she that we had to watch so, for fear of her doing herself a mischief after you was took away,—my lady's eldest daughter! Well—that'll do for the present. I've no call to stay here any longer."

Stealthily, then, Mr. Yates withdrew from the window, stepping backwards till he was at some distance from it; he then turned and rejoined the commissioner, who had been watching his movements with some curiosity.

"You told me," said Mr. Yates, "that the person who lived in that house was named Perrotin?"

"Certainly, monsieur!"

"Are you sure of it?"

"Quite sure."

"Then I am mistaken. It is not the Perrotin I supposed it was. I never saw him before; so it was just as well I didn't go blundering in before I ascertained the fact. Now show me the way back to the hotel."

Monsieur Dufourmantelle had studied the travelling community till he flattered himself he knew mankind, and was incapable of being deceived; but the easy assurance of Mr. Yates was too much for him; he believed what he said, and in this belief retired that night to rest.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A MESSAGE.

TWICE to have passed over the same ground, although by twilight only, was enough for Mr. Yates, whose memory was equally retentive of places as of persons. He had no diffi-

culty, therefore, in finding his way alone, next morning, to the Chemin aux Bœufs; but, instead of proceeding direct to Monsieur Perrotin's house, he turned into the cemetery on the opposite side of the road. Mr. Yates did not, however, seek out this sacred spot to meditate among the tombs, to weep for the loss of friends, or to add fresh wreaths to the votive offerings that clustered above every monument, though there was a rare choice of *immortelles* at the cemetery gate. The performance of these pious duties he left to others, his object being business, which, seen from his point of view, had little in common with either piety or affection. It was, in fact, to keep a sharp look-out on the movements of Monsieur Perrotin's family that Mr. Yates established himself in the enclosure in such a position as completely to command the house he came to watch.

Bent over a sad funereal urn, with his eyes shaded by his hand, in an attitude of deep affliction, his keen glance never wandered from Monsieur Perrotin's door, and it was not long before some of the occupants were visible. The first who appeared was Walter, with his *casquette* on his head and a book in his hand, most likely the one which Mr. Yates had seen him studying. He was on his way to the *Maîtrise*; but before he took his final departure he went back into the house, and his merry laugh replied to something that was said to him by a female voice within. He presently came out again smiling, tossing in the air and catching a large rosy-cheeked apple, which Rachel, no doubt, had given him to keep away the pangs of hunger between breakfast and early dinner. Mr. Yates heard his "Good-by," and then saw him jump down the steps and run along the road.—After an interval of about a quarter of an hour, Monsieur Perrotin himself came to the door. He, too, was provided with a book, one of the necessities of his daily teaching, and also hastened towards the town. But Mr. Yates was not yet satisfied; he still kept watch, and at last his patience was rewarded by the appearance of a middle-aged woman in full Norman costume, having a large market-basket on her arm. This was the *femme de ménage*, and now the coast was clear.

Decorously wiping his eyes, though he had no tears to dry, Mr. Yates repassed the cemetery gate and approached

the dwelling of the teacher of languages. He knocked, and the door was opened by Rachel, who, seeing a stranger, asked him, in broken French, what he desired? To her surprise she was answered in her native language, the speaker inquiring if she were Madame Perrotin. Rachel replied in the affirmative, and Mr. Yates, observing that he had a message for her from England, at once walked, in without waiting for an invitation, and entering the room which he had surveyed the night before, threw himself into a chair and leisurely looked about him.

Troubled by his manner even more than displeased by his rudeness, Rachel remained standing, waiting for him to speak again. He seemed in no hurry to do so, his attention being occupied by the various contents of the apartment, of which apparently he was taking a mental inventory, and she was obliged to open the conversation.

"You have a message for me, sir," she said; "may I beg the favour of your name?"

"My name," he replied, bluntly, "is of no consequence to you. Is that the picture of your son as I see hanging over the fireplace yonder?"

Rachel turned pale at the abrupt question. This man's evil countenance had possessed her with a sudden fear; but she tried to keep up her courage.

"He may or may not be my son," she said; "that can be no business of yours. I wish to know who *you* are, and what you want with me."

"You'll soon find out what I want," he returned. "As to my business,—you can read writing, I suppose? Read that!"

He took out a letter as he spoke, and held it towards her. She received it with a trembling hand, glanced at the superscription, which bore her Christian name only, but did not venture to break the seal.

Mr. Yates noticed her embarrassment.

"I dare say," he said, "you can give a sort of a guess where that letter comes from. Now then, if you don't want me to tell you the contents, open it."

She did as he told her, and began to read.

If her cheek were pale beforehand, its paleness was rivalled now by the whiteness of her lips, from which all the

colour fled the instant the first lines met her eye. And well it might; for, to her simple apprehension, the words written there were the most terrible that ever were penned.

The letter ran thus:—

“You have been guilty of FELONY. The laws which your wretched husband and yourself have broken *can be enforced where you now are*, and it only depends on me to have them put in execution. If you would avoid the pain of exposure and *the punishment due to your crime*, throw yourselves at once on my mercy by delivering up the child *whom you stole from Moorside* to the bearer of this, *who has authority from me* to receive him.

“MARGARET SCROPE.”

All Rachel's strength failed her; the paper dropped on the floor, and she sank upon her knees.

“Oh no, no!” she cried, “you will not take him away from me. You cannot be so cruel!”

Mr. Yates remained wholly unmoved. He lost a day when one went by without his witnessing human suffering.

“You know my business *now*,” he said. “And if you're wise you'll do as my lady bids you.”

Rachel burst into tears and buried her face in her hands. Heedless of her grief, Mr. Yates continued:—

“If you don't, you must take the consequences. The penalty for kidnapping is transportation for life; so you know what you've got to look to.”

“But,” exclaimed Rachel, suddenly looking up, “my lady has no right to the boy as long as his mother lives!”

“What claim have *you* to him?” retorted Mr. Yates. “And how do *you* know his mother is alive? Suppose I was to tell you that she's been dead and buried these three years! Don't you take it into your head that my lady acts without warrant. If you do, you'll get the worst of it, as sure as my name's Matthew Yates.”

Rachel looked in the man's face and shuddered. Her instinctive fear of him was now explained: she recollected who he was; she remembered to whose hands Edith had been consigned.

“Ah,” said Mr. Yates, “I thought it was time to jog your

memory, I'm not one as does things by halves. Let's have no more fuss, but bring the boy to me to-morrow morning. That's where I'm staying. I give you all day to think over the matter. Only bear this in mind. A word from me to the prefect of police sends you and your husband to *quod*: you understand what that means! And you lose the boy into the bargain."

With these words he rose, threw his hotel card on the table, and left the room with as much indifference as he had shown on entering it.

Rachel was dismayed, stunned, by the events of the last few minutes. She thought less of her own or of her husband's fate than of that of the darling of her heart. A little while ago and she had speculated on the hope of moving Mrs. Scrope to acknowledge Walter. Now he was actually claimed by her, and she trembled to think of giving him back.

But it was the nature of the demand that roused her fears. If Mrs. Scrope meant well towards her grandson, would she have made choice such a man as this Yates for her messenger?

How should she act, how temporize to turn aside the blow?

Only one course suggested itself; but before that could be taken she must consult her husband.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### STOLE AWAY!

WHILE Rachel was sadly meditating on the danger to which Walter was exposed, she heard Monsiur Perrotin at the door.

Nature had not gifted him with an ear for music, neither had he profited by his acquaintance with Monsieur Cantagrel to acquire the slightest rudiments of harmonious utterance; but there were moments, notwithstanding, when it behoved the teacher of languages to lift up his voice in song. It was not his habit to do this convivially, or in any

way *coram publico*; but when quite alone, and with some secret cause for rejoicing, he would privately indulge in melody—after his own peculiar fashion. It is true his *répertoire* was not extensive, being limited, in fact, to the first verse of “Malbrouk;” but for a man who does not sing much, who happens to be a Frenchman, and is not very particular as to what he sings, “Malbrouk” is enough. So, with a light heart and nobody near, Monsieur Perrotin came quavering along the Chemin aux Bœufs, and thus signalled his approach to his wife. The *refrain* was on his lips as he entered, but he did not complete it, for the tears that stood in Rachel’s eyes changed the current of his thoughts directly.

“My dear wife,” he said, hastening towards her—“you cry! What have you?”

“Oh, Pascal,” she replied, “I have some dreadful news to tell.”

“Mon Dieu!” he exclaimed, “there is arrived no misfortune to that dear child?”

“No, Pascal, no! Not yet! But it may happen at any time. He is not safe for a moment.”

Monsieur Perrotin looked bewildered.

“Tell to me what is this!” he said.

“There has been a person here,” answered Rachel, “who brought me a letter from Mrs. Scrope.”

“And then?”

“She claims Walter. We are ordered to give him up; he is to be—to be—taken ——”

Her sobs prevented her from going on.

Monsieur Perrotin sat down beside his wife.

“Rachel,” he said, soothingly “cry not. That does to me harm. It is very painful, I know, for you, and also for me, to think of to part from Walterre; but if Madame Scrop command it, then should we be glad that at last she has good intentions.”

“Ah, Pascal, I cannot bring myself to believe that she means kindness. Judge for yourself!”

So saying, she gave her husband Mrs. Scrope’s letter. He also grew pale, and his hand trembled while he read it.

“Certainly,” he said, when he had ended, “love for our boy is not there written.”

“Neither is it in her heart!” cried Rachel. “The past

speaks for itself, and now these threats! Oh, if you had only seen the man who came for Walter!"

"Is he the servant to Madame Scrop?"

"When she wants him; yes! He is the one I told you of that was brought down with his wife to look after Miss Edith before Walter was born. For all the evil those two did, God forgive them! He told me," continued Rachel, speaking with difficulty—"he told me Miss Edith was dead! Oh, Pascal, what are we to do?"

"My love," said Monsieur Perrotin, pressing his wife's hand tenderly, "perhaps we have in our power something. A quarter of an hour ago I was of a gay humour: you hear me sing in my walking?"

Rachel smiled faintly.

"Yes; that is always a good sign with you."

"You have reason. What for I was gay to-day I tell you. It came of Monsieur Vermeil, who, since the people are talking of the *escapade* of Jules—the reason why he jump himself into the river—is a greatly changed person. You know, my dear wife, that in France the ridicule kills. For a sword or a pistol—bah—it is nothing! But to mock him, no one can endure that! Therefore, in the first place, Monsieur Vermeil break all to pieces that famous work which we inaugurate. I pass by his shop this morning. The '*Récompense de la Vertu*' is no longer in the window; all is emptiness. I go in to ask how that is. I see Monsieur Vermeil. 'My friend,' he say, 'you are the person I want. Come with me!' He take me into a back room, where I find sitting Madame Vermeil. They have much to speak about."

We will relieve Monsieur Perrotin of the task of telling his story in broken English, by speaking for him ourselves.

The subject of discussion was Jules. His father had formed the resolve of removing him from Rouen, but could not decide where to send him. It was a question whether he should go to London or Paris, and Monsieur Perrotin's advice was asked, with a special proposition annexed. Although Monsieur Vermeil's artistic triumph had been brief, the affection for Walter, generated by its cause, was enduring; he was, indeed, the *enfant gâté* of the confectioner and his wife—the chosen friend of Jules, and the hero of



Mademoiselle Cécile. With what Monsieur Vermeil had to say about his son he also associated Walter. The confectioner had driven too brisk a trade for the last twenty years to be other than a rich man, and he knew, as well as the teacher of languages himself, that Monsieur and Madame Perrotin were poor; but that difference, to a delicate mind, made all the difficulty. Monsieur Vermeil's motives, of course, were mixed ones—it is difficult to meet with any that are not; but as the friendship between the two boys was strong, he based his proposition on their mutual regard: it was to the effect that Walter should accompany Jules, and that all the expenses attendant upon their residence elsewhere should be defrayed by the too grateful confectioner. Monsieur Perrotin was taken by surprise, and knew not what to reply: indeed, it was not possible for him to give an answer at once, as Rachel must first be consulted. But he did not throw cold water on the scheme, because it struck him that the change would be advantageous to Walter. He had given the boy the best education his means afforded, but he felt that something more was necessary than either himself, the Abbé Ramier, or Monsieur Cantagrel could teach. Amongst them they had made Walter a perfect French scholar; his general acquirements were good, and if, in addition, he could have the advantage of two or three years at a college in Paris, he would be qualified then for any pursuit, should he eventually be compelled to seek his own living. As far as Walter was concerned, England was out of the question; and, partially entertaining the confectioner's proposition, he easily persuaded him to throw London overboard, Madame Vermeil herself being all in favour of Paris. Monsieur Perrotin could not absolutely promise what was asked, but he bade his friend be of good cheer, and they parted, each in a happier frame of mind than when they met. It was the cheerful complexion of his thoughts which had stimulated his vocal organs as the teacher of languages wended homewards.

"You see, then, my dear wife," said he, in conclusion,—  
"you see how an opportunity arises for placing Walterre beyond the reach of this terrible man! In Paris he should never be found!"

"It was my own idea to fly with Walter," replied Rachel,

"to leave him in safety somewhere, and never rest, myself, till I have discovered Miss Edith, and told her all his story. But if she is dead, what will become of the darling child?"

Although the reverse of suspicious, Monsieur Perrotin was not deficient in penetration, and readily conjectured that Yates might have coined a lie for the occasion.

"If I believe him or not," he said, "that makes nothing. First we shall prevent Walterre to fall in his hands; afterwards we think upon what is to be done. When comes this person again?"

Rachel told him that Yates had promised to wait till the next morning, when, in case Walter were not given up, he had threatened to denounce them to the police. As matters stood, she thankfully accepted the kind offer of Monsieur Vermeil. Was it not possible, she asked, to hurry the departure of Jules? Monsieur Perrotin replied that he would see about that immediately, and lost no time in returning to the Rue des Carmes, where, closeted once more with Monsieur Vermeil, he did not hesitate to explain how Rachel and himself were situated; and the worthy confectioner, delighted to be of more use than he had imagined, assured Monsieur Perrotin that Jules could set out at a moment's notice, if necessary. It was finally agreed that all should be ready on both sides for leaving Rouen that night; Monsieur Vermeil would accompany his son to Paris, and take charge of Rachel and Walter. To keep their departure secret, it was settled that the travellers should meet at the railway.

While Monsieur Perrotin was absent making this arrangement, Walter came in from the *Maîtrise*. Rachel addressed him with as cheerful an air as she could put on:—

"How should you like, Walter," she said, "to go to Paris?"

His eyes sparkled.

"To Paris? Oh, of all things in the world! No—not that exactly; I would rather return to England. But still I should like very much to see Paris, I have heard so much said of it. What do you mean?"

"I mean, Walter, that you and I are going."

"And Monsieur Perrotin?"

"He remains here—for the present."

"For the present! Then, are we going to stay long?"

"Perhaps we may, Walter."

"And when is it to be?"

"What do you think of our being off before to-morrow?"

"How very sudden! I never heard you talk of going before."

"There are reasons for it, Walter—strong ones."

"Rachel, dear, you look pale. Are you ill? Has anything vexed you? It isn't me. I wouldn't vex you for ever so much. Tell me, Rachel!"

He looked her anxiously in the face as he spoke. She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"Oh! no, no, dearest boy; you never vexed me in your life."

"Something is the matter, though," he said—"something that you don't like to mention."

Rachel hesitated. She was at a loss what reply to make. Again she was tempted to reveal his whole history, but a moment's reflection satisfied her that this, at any rate, was not the time for doing so. An expedient suggested itself that approached near enough to the truth to meet the necessity of the case.

"You remember the way, Walter, in which you left Yorkshire?"

"To be sure I do," he answered, laughing; "I took French leave of Mr. Binks. I shall never forget how we tumbled the bag of flour into the beck."

"Suppose Mr. Binks had sent for you at last?"

"He might send till he was tired; he would never get me back again. You wouldn't let me go, would you, Rachel?"

"Never, dear Walter! There is no fear of that. But we must leave Rouen as quickly as possible, for somebody did come here to fetch you this morning, and the same person means to return to-morrow."

"But why should we run away? Mr. Binks has no right to me; I'll never live with anybody but you. I'll tell the fellow so to his face!"

"You had better not see his face, Walter. It is one that people remember to their sorrow. No, my dear child, it must be as I have said. We cannot stay here."

"Very well, Rachel. If you say so, that's enough for

me. But I shall have a good deal to do. I must go and say 'good-bye' to the Vermeils, and the abbé, and Monsieur Cantagrel, and I don't know how many people, besides all the fellows at the *Matrise*, not forgetting Madame Gembloux. I shall be sorry, though, to part with Jules."

"I think it very likely there will be no occasion for that. But here comes my husband; he will tell us all about it."

It was a great delight to Walter to find that Monsieur Vermeil and Jules were to be his companions, and a pleasure to know that Madame Vermeil and Cécile would be at the station to take leave, as he had a great regard for them all. But he was disappointed at being told that he could not make the various *adieux* he had proposed, it being desirable to let as few persons as possible know of the journey. If it reached the ears of Madame Gembloux that they were going, all Rouen would hear of it before night. Walter was obliged, therefore, to content himself with writing farewell letters to the Abbé Ramier and his preceptor, which Monsieur Perrotin promised faithfully to deliver, with many personal remembrances.

With this and with other preparations the rest of the day was consumed. It was an anxious one for Rachel, who dreaded lest her obnoxious visitor should take it into his head to return before the time he had named. No impediment, however, arose to prevent the execution of her project, and at the hour appointed the respective families met in the waiting-room of the station. To judge by the apparel of Monsieur Vermeil and Jules, it might have been supposed that, instead of midsummer, it was the depth of winter, and the scene not France but Lapland, so ample and heavy were the cloaks that swathed them, so resolutely were their sealskin caps tied over their ears, so completely were they muffled in suffocating comforters. The *comestibles*, too, which Madame Vermeil's care had provided, would have sufficed them for a journey to the other end of Europe. And then the counsel she gave for avoiding the insidious night air, for the security of their persons and baggage, for the prevention of every sort of accident. Finally, the leave-takings, the multiplied embraces, the unrestricted application of pocket-handkerchiefs, the more last words:

"Adieu, mon mari!" "Adieu, ma femme!" "Adieu,

mon père!" "Adieu, ma sœur!" "Tu m'éciras, n'est-ce pas?" "Que je t'embrasse encore!" "Finisses donc!" "Mon Dieu, est-il possible! Tu pars!" "Ah, ça, rappelle-toi, mon ami, il y a une langue fumée dans le panier." "Je m'en garderai bien de l'oublier." "Oh, que c'est navrant de te voir partir!" "Bon voyage, Madame Perrotin!" "Bon voyage, Walterre!" "Dis donc 'adieu,' Cécile!" "Ah, maman, je—ne—peux—pas,—ah—ah,—ah!——"

These last ejaculations were the sobs of Mademoiselle Cécile, whose grief was the loudest of all the party.

It is so sad to lose one's father and brother! But there is something more heartrending still—when one is not yet sixteen!

It was a very pretty little purse that some one pressed into Walter's hand at the very last moment. I wonder who gave it him!

He had not time to thank the giver, for the train was already in motion, bound for that "pleasant place of all festivity," which, in the opinion of every Frenchman, has no parallel in the universe.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

HOW MR. YATES MADE SOME VALUABLE ACQUAINTANCE AT ROUEN.

AFTER leaving the Chemin aux Bœufs, Mr. Yates, satisfied that he had effectually wrought on Rachel's fears, and never doubting that Walter would be given up to him on the morrow, began to cast about for the means of amusing himself during the remainder of the day. Having no taste for antiquities or Gothic architecture, and the beauties of nature being entirely thrown away upon him, his time might have hung heavily on his hands if he had not remembered Monsieur Dufourmantelle's promise to procure a ticket of admission to the public *maison de santé*.

On arriving at the Hôtel de l'Europe he found the smiling commissioner in attendance, provided with the necessary order, and at the disposal of Mr. Yates whenever

the latter chose. Together, therefore, they proceeded towards the only place that possessed any attraction for the English stranger. Of course, not silently: Monsieur Dufourmantelle took care of that, though the conversation was all on his side, for Mr. Yates was in one of those taciturn moods which were habitual with him.

Had the garrulous commissioner accompanied a Frenchman he would have been at no loss for a subject, but with his present companion it was difficult to discover a topic of interest. To Monsieur Dufourmantelle's remarks on the comeliness of the Norman women, Mr. Yates turned a deaf ear; he was equally impassible under the declaration that Norman courage and Norman wit were nowhere so admirably developed as at Rouen. Neither did he seem to pay the slightest attention to the commissioner's unhesitating assertion that, if one desired to be gay, the Norman capital was, of all others, the city in which that propensity could be indulged in to the fullest extent. Monsieur Dufourmantelle's only resource, then, was to go upon a tack which, in all his experience, he had never known to fail with any of our countrymen; and that was, to speak of the various English travellers of rank whom it had been his good fortune to wait upon in his capacity of *cicerone*.

He went through a long list, however, before he obtained any acknowledgment that his theme was agreeable; but at last he mentioned a name that caused Mr. Yates to look round and ask him sharply what he said.

As he had done on a former occasion with Rachel, the commissioner repeated the name of "Miladi Stuntall," and the resemblance to her right appellation was sufficiently near to assure Mr. Yates of whom he spoke.

"Yes, it was a very great privilege to have had the honour of attending upon a person so distinguished as Miladi, who was above all things *une très grande dame*; and then there was a charming episode, the heroine of which was Miladi's lovely young daughter. Oh, it was perfectly delicious! Singularly enough, as monsieur would admit when he heard it, the English boy who used to sing so divinely, and of whom he had spoken the night before in the cathedral, was connected with the little history. Ah, he (Dufourmantelle) understood these things—he had himself had adventures

when he was barely the height of monsieur's cane; one of them, he was sorry to say, had ended tragically, but what could he do? This, however, was altogether delightful. It was an *affaire de cœur*, quite refreshing at that tender age! Would monsieur like to hear the particulars? Mademoiselle had heard the English boy sing—she had been quite *attendrie* by his voice—that was a fact which he (Dufourmantelle) had personally witnessed, and was prepared, if called upon, to swear to. Only as a man of honour, he respected those emotions: to him they were religiously sacred. Nevertheless, the fact existed, and in the interests of his narrative he was bound to mention it."

Mr. Yates asked him what he was driving at.

"Ah, monsieur was right to recall him to his subject. He (Dufourmantelle) was apt to be led away by his feelings, but monsieur, who doubtless was of a sensitive nature himself, would pardon him. Where was he? Oh, he remembered. In the cathedral. It was there the pretty Miss and the young English boy saw each other and had some conversation together. Afterwards, on Sir Stuntall and Miladi leaving the hotel, he had been intrusted with a small *paquet* for the wonderful chorister."

"By which of them?" asked Mr. Yates.

"By neither: it was from their daughter: a little secret; monsieur would comprehend."

If Mr. Yates did comprehend, he said nothing, but listened with a dogged look while the commissioner went on, betraying two innocent children through the mere exercise of his gossiping function:—

"Well, after a time—he confessed there was a little delay on his part, arising from the pressure of important affairs—he transmitted the *paquet* as he had been requested,—that is to say, he placed it in the hands of Madame Perrotin, to be given by her. Within a few days of that event, the English boy came to find him at the hotel, desirous to learn some particulars concerning the young and beautiful miss."

"He did not know, then, who she was?" Mr. Yates inquired.

"Not at that time."

"You told him?"

"Monsieur guessed rightly. Being presented by Sir Stuntall with one of his visiting cards, no difficulty existed in that respect."

Mr. Yates wanted to know what the boy said when he received the intelligence.

"He read the name on the card," said the commissioner, "with much attention, and then he asked me several questions about the young lady. Did I not think her very beautiful? What age I supposed her to be? What were the exact words she used when she charged me with her message? *Mille petits riens comme ça, monsieur!*"

There was an ominous expression on Mr. Yates's sinister features, as if he thought nothing a trifle that related to Walter Cobham. One idea, however, seemed to preoccupy him more than any other.

"Are you quite sure that this boy knew nothing about Sir James Tunstall before he came to you?"

"Assuredly not! How could he? His first question was to know. But monsieur is acquainted with Sir Stuntall?"

"I am," said Mr. Yates. "Have you anything more to say?"

"Yes," returned the commissioner, "there remains something. On many occasions, Walterre, so the English boy is called, has visited me, always to speak of the same young person. It is quite evident to me that he has fallen in love with her: he continually repeats her name. Finally, he asks me if it were possible that he should write to thank her for the little present which she made him."

"What was it?" abruptly demanded Mr. Yates.

"A cameo ring—a female head, as well as I could perceive; he only showed it to me once, and then but for an instant, before his hand closed upon it."

"Did he write?"

"To me it appeared that such an act was required by mere politeness. I advised him, therefore, to do so."

"And when was this?"

"But three days ago. Yesterday morning he brought me the letter. He had never written to anybody before, and was afraid to trust to the post. He preferred that I should forward it, as he knew that I had opportunities of



sending to London by the numerous English travellers who stop at the hotel on their way home."

"And have you sent it?"

"Effectively, no, monsieur. The opportunity has not yet presented itself."

"If you choose," said Mr. Yates, carelessly—"I mean, if it will be any convenience to you, I will take care of it. I return to-morrow."

"Monsieur is only too good. I accept with many thanks. Here is the letter."

From an agenda, plethoric with hotel-cards and travellers' testimonials in favour of Jean Baptiste Dufourmantelle, the commissioner drew forth Walter's letter, and gave it to Mr. Yates, who smiled grimly as he transferred it to his own pocket-book.

"I am charmed to think," said his guide, "that monsieur has been interested in the details of this little affair. Ah, here is the *maison de santé*!"

It was a large establishment, and, like every other of the kind in France, admirably conducted. Mr. Yates, however, was not pleased with it. He was no admirer of the soothing system, which he frankly pronounced to be humbug.

"Make 'em afraid of you. That's my motto! You may argue with a madman till you're black in the face; you can't convince him. But just clap a strait-waistcoat on him and give him a good stunning blow over the head; you'll soon bring him to, then. Mad folks can't be cured. To try to do it is a flying in the face of Providence. It's a visitation for life, is madness. I've seen a good many of these lunatics in my time, and I never treated 'em but one way; and I never mean to."

Such had often been the expressed opinion of Mr. Yates, and of this complexion were his thoughts as he quitted the *maison de santé*. What else could Monsieur Dufourmantelle do for him? Nothing. He'd rather be left to himself; he didn't want company. He should stroll about the town; he didn't care where. So with many bows, Monsieur Dufourmantelle withdrew, promising himself the pleasure of telling Walter, if he should chance to meet with him, how well he had executed his commission.

Left alone, Mr. Yates turned over in his mind the information he had obtained. It was material to know that Rachel had not yet made Walter aware of the secret of his birth. Had she revealed it, she must also have communicated the fact that Lady Tunstall was his aunt; this, it was evident, she had not done; therefore, she had been silent altogether—hitherto. But how might she be disposed to act with the prospect before her of losing the child? Should he see her again and offer money for her silence? Mrs. Scrope had supplied him with plenty, to be used at his discretion. On reflection, he was convinced that this plan would not answer. An attempt to bribe might rouse Rachel's suspicions of the authority he asserted. At present she was under the influence of fear; she had reason for knowing that he was not one to be trifled with; his mark didn't wear out in a hurry. After all, what would it signify if the boy really found out his parentage? It was but denying Rachel's statement, or calling him a by-blow! In the place Mr. Yates meant to ship Walter off to, people made little account of such stories. Well-born or ill, legitimate or bastard, it would be all the same to the folks he got among. A farm-servant in the marshes of the Macquarie—Mr. Yates knew a family out there that often wanted farm-servants from the old country, they died off rather fast—well, any one so situated might talk, if he had time, but wouldn't get many to listen to him. Mr. Yates, then, would risk the discovery. He next thought of the letter which the commissioner had given him. He took it out and read the superscription, which was as follows: "Miss Mary Tunstall, to the care of Sir James Tunstall, No. 50, Belgrave Square."

"For all the chance she has of getting a letter with that address," soliloquized the keeper, "it might as well stay in my pocket or go into the fire. I fancy Sir James would like to read it first himself, and if the boy is as hot as his father was, good-by to it. That, however, is not my game. I've a better use for the letter. Somebody I know won't mind what she pays for this bit of paper. Anything, I should say, rather than let it reach its destination."

Occupied by speculations of this kind, Mr. Yates wandered about, not caring where he went, till he began to

feel both tired and thirsty. He had taken the line of the *boulevards* till it brought him to an obscure part of the town called the "Champ de Foire aux Boissons," where the market is held for the sale of cider and other liquors. As a matter of course, *cabarets* were not scarce in this quarter, for the "pot de vin" had a literal as well as a figurative acceptation here, in bringing bargains to a close. None of these houses were of very inviting appearance; but Mr. Yates was not particular, and walking into the nearest, called for a bottle of good wine.

The place he had entered, dignified by the title of "Salle de Billard," was a very large room, one side of which held a billiard-table, and the other was filled with common wooden chairs and small square tables, much dirtied and stained, and not arranged in the most orderly manner; in the intervening space stood a counter covered with bottles and glasses, at which a slatternly woman, with a bright-red handkerchief knotted round her head, served, out "vin bleu" or "spiritueux" according to the tastes of her customers. It was not exactly the place to expect wine of the first quality, though the lady at the counter said, if she did not swear—her asseveration sounding very like an oath—that better was not to be had in Rouen, and the price was eight-and-thirty *sous*! Whatever it was, Mr. Yates made no objection, but, seating himself at one of the tables, poured out a tumbler and drank it off at a draught. Presently he repeated the libation, and pending the discussion of the rest of the bottle—his thirst being somewhat assuaged—took a survey of the apartment.

Art flourished, of course, on its walls; but, as we have already said, Mr. Yates was not a man who appreciated art, in a pictorial sense, and his keen eye turned towards something more congenial. It rested on the features of a man in a *blouse*, who was playing at billiards with the owner of the *cabaret*, the husband of the *dame de comptoir*. He was tall and strongly-made, and not ill-favoured; but there was an expression in his countenance of so much cunning and audacity, that very few could look upon it without some feeling of uneasiness. Of these few, however, Mr. Yates was one: the experience acquired in his profession had blunted in him all sense of apprehension.

The game was as noisily played as is customary where Frenchmen are concerned, and for a time neither of the players took any notice of the new-comer; but at last Mr. Yates perceived that he was the object of attention on the part of the man in the *blouse*. Though conversant enough with the French language, he could only make out a word or two, here and there, of what he said, all the rest being either the *patois* of the country, or else some jargon with which the keeper of the *cabaret* and his friend were familiar. After a few phrases, which seemed to be question and answer, had passed between them, the *blousard* addressed Mr. Yates in very excellent French.

Monsieur, he remarked, was apparently a stranger in Rouen.

Mr. Yates replied in the affirmative; he had only arrived the day before.

Upon this intimation, the *cabaretier* made use of the word "Vermillon," and his companion shut one eye, a grimace not thrown away upon Mr. Yates, who gathered that the term applied to him—as in fact it did—that colour being the cant term for an Englishman.

The *blousard* continued: Monsieur found it difficult, no doubt, to amuse himself in a strange place.

No. Mr. Yates was, he said—though his face belied him—easily amused.

Did he like billiards?

Yes. He confessed he was rather partial to the game.

In that case, perhaps monsieur would like a *partie*. He (the speaker) felt ashamed to occupy the table when a skilful player was, most probably, present.

Mr. Yates denied the inference; he could, he said, only just knock the balls about—omitting to add, as he saw no necessity for making the statement—that, amongst other occupations in the early part of his career, he had been a billiard-marker.

"As for me," returned the gentleman in the blouse, "I can do no more. I was, in fact, taking a lesson, when you came in, from Monsieur Dubois, here. He, who lives on the spot, has plenty of opportunities for practice, while I, who come from a distance, scarcely handle a cue oftener than once a year. No. I occupy myself, monsieur, with

agriculture and the breeding of horses, on a farm I have, not far from Pont de l'Arche."

"And no one," observed Monsieur Dubois, "sends finer animals to market. They are, indeed, superb, as you would admit, monsieur, were you to visit my friend Mercier's establishment. Ah, it is worth making the journey to Pont de l'Arche to see his stud! Is monsieur a judge of horse-flesh?"

Mr. Yates could not say that exactly, but he was fond of the horse: it was such a noble animal! He used to ride when he was a boy.

Mr. Yates might have added, "a good deal;" for, until he was turned out of a racing-stable, at thirteen, for being concerned in a "doctoring" transaction, he had gone to scale as often as most young jocks. His education, indeed, though desultory, had been cared for in one or two other useful particulars. It was, however, a question in his own mind, just then, whether he had been quite so well educated as Monsieur Mercier, whom he strongly suspected of being a sharper, a *maquignon*, and something more. There was a test at hand, he felt certain. Nor had he long to wait for it.

"I think, Auguste," said Monsieur Dubois, addressing his friend, "that as you and monsieur are both beginners, you can't do better than have a game together. I am, in truth, an old hand, and if we were to make a *poule*, I should carry off all the eggs!"

All laughed at the joke, which the rustic breeder of horses declared was famous; he then expressed his willingness to play, if monsieur would condescend to excuse his ignorance. Mr. Yates did condescend, and the game began.

Any one wholly in the secret would have been entertained with the process. It was a trial of skill as to which should exhibit the greatest awkwardness, make the most natural mistakes, and accomplish the most difficult strokes by apparently the merest chance. Monsieur Dubois, with that frank *bonhomie* which seemed a part of his nature, acknowledged that neither of the players were *très forts*, but he made allowances for the table being strange to monsieur, and if it was agreeable to his friend Mercier, he would not

mind wagering a trifle that the gentleman would beat him, in—say the best of seven games. No. Monsieur Mercier felt his inferiority, and would not tempt his fortune; besides, he seldom or ever played for anything. It was enough for him to lose a single game. Monsieur Dubois saw that his friend had grown miserly; rich men generally were so. Would he not risk something for the good of the house? A bottle of *vieux Macon*, a *pot de cidre*, a *petit verre de trois-six* all round, or of *sacré chien tout pur*, if he preferred it? To this taunt Monsieur Mercier replied that he never tasted “spiritueux,”—cider was his usual beverage—but as monsieur, he observed, drank wine, he would break through his general rule, and stake a bottle. Mr. Yates, having reflected a moment, thought he might as well win on this occasion, and, on his part, Monsieur Mercier was equally disposed to lose: the result, accordingly, agreed with the intention of each. Monsieur Dubois, as he poured out the wine, could not restrain his mirth at the expense of his country friend, and the latter, whose temper was evidently hasty, became irritated, and threw down a five-franc piece for the next stake. He lost again, of course—and again. At last he was fifty francs to the bad, and, goaded to desperation by his ill-luck—there could be no other reason—madly challenged monsieur to play for what he liked. There were five hundred francs in that bag, the price of a horse he had just sold; would monsieur put down a similar sum? Here Monsieur Dubois interposed in the interest of his friend. Could he not see that monsieur was the best player? He must inevitably come off the worst! Was he not content with what he had lost already? No matter, he claimed his revenge. Monsieur Dubois was vexed in his turn. A man who would not listen to reason deserved to suffer, and sulkily he withdrew to the counter, resolved no longer to countenance his friend’s folly. He did not play his part badly, neither did Monsieur Auguste Mercier—neither did Mr. Yates, whose air of triumph seemed as genuine as if he were really the dupe of the other two.

Once more the antagonists went to work. It was a match of seven games, as had been originally proposed by Monsieur Dubois. Marvellously bad were the strokes on both sides,

singularly fortunate the accidents which made the players three games all. It was so even a thing, this time, that the *cabaretier* got the better of his indignation, and, from mere curiosity, came back to witness the termination of the match. Each had marked a few points of the seventh game, but the balls would not break : they never do with bad players ! To score seemed next to impossible, but, in the face of absurdity, Mr. Yates made the attempt, and was successful. The confederates looked at each other with surprise. Mr. Yates observed the intelligence between them. He played again. The stroke was as difficult as before : he made it. The surprise of the confederates was now dismay : the game was on the balls. Mr. Yates looked up, and laughed :—

“You have waited too long,” he said ; “shall I go on ?”

The *blousard* at once comprehended the state of the case. He turned to the *cabaretier* :—

“*Satire-mâtin*,” he muttered, “*v’là du cavé. Est-il alpiou l’pot-de-bière ? Faut faire du raisiné.*” (We are done ! The Englishman is a cheat. He must be let blood !)

As he spoke, his hand stole into his bosom, and he fixed on Mr. Yates a glance of deadly meaning.

Although it was hardly encountered, the keeper drew back a pace, and shifted the end of his cue so as to hold it like a club : he knew the value of his weapon, and had the billiard-table between him and the street-door. The other, balked of his intention, thought better of his menace, withdrew his hand from beneath his blouse, and held out his open palm.

“I don’t ask you,” he said, “to finish the game. Be friends ! Give me back my money, and let us drink another bottle together !”

“Willingly,” replied the keeper, who, though a resolute man, was glad at heart to be so well out of the scrape.

There was freemasonry between the ruffians, and before Mr. Yates left the *cabaret*, the boon companions knew that, whatever each other’s antecedents, they stood upon equal terms.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## A DEFEAT AND A COMPACT.

MR. YATES laid a somewhat disturbed head on his pillow that night, but it arose from physical causes only. When he surrendered his conscience to his employers, he at the same time made over to them responsibility for all his acts, and so was never troubled by any qualms of morbid feeling. He was not in the habit of drinking quite so much bad brandy as he had imbibed at the *cabaret* of the "Champ de Foire aux Boissons" in cementing friendship with Messieurs Mercier and Dubois; and this, with the wine taken before and afterwards, had slightly muddled his generally clear intellect. The only effect, however, of his potations, was to make him sleep a little sounder, and wake a little later than usual; but when he did awake, he was fully prepared for the business on hand.

He had rather looked for some deprecatory message or visit on the part of Rachel, if it were only a tribute to his own importance. Still, he felt no misgiving at not having heard from or seen her, and proceeded to Monsieur Perrotin's to claim Walter Cobham as coolly as a tax-gatherer calls for the parish rates. But even tax-gatherers sometimes reckon without their host, and so, we need hardly say, did Mr. Yates.

Dispensing with the ceremony of knocking, he entered the house with his accustomed freedom; but instead of finding Rachel, as he had anticipated, he beheld only Monsieur Perrotin.

"Where is your wife?" he abruptly inquired.

Monsieur Perrotin, who was reading, looked up from his book. He expected the visit, and replied by asking a question also:

"Who are you?"

"No matter. I want to see your wife."

"She is not at home."

"She ought to be. I told her I was coming."



Monsieur Perrotin resumed his book.

Mr. Yates began to chafe.

"Come," said he, "this kind of thing won't do with me! I suppose you know what brought me here?"

"Hardly—unless you tell your name."

"My name is Yates."

"Very good. Next, your business?"

"I've come for that boy."

"Who mean you?"

"Him that you and your wife stole away from Yorkshire."

"Stole away from Yorkshire!" repeated Monsieur Perrotin.

"Put it how you like. Stole or inveigled, it's all one in the eye of the law. Where is he?"

"I know not."

"You refuse to say?"

"I refuse to give answer to you, sir."

"You shall answer, then, to somebody else. But I'm not to be put off in this way. I must search the house."

"Search where you please," returned Monsieur Perrotin; "I help you to look."

Mr. Yates stared with astonishment. What was the meaning of this reception—so different from the terror exhibited by Rachel? Had they ventured to remove the boy? He would soon see!

Crossing the apartment hastily, he threw open a door. The next room was a kitchen, where the *femme de ménage* was busy with her *pot-au-feu*. The keeper saw at a glance that she was alone, and rushed up-stairs, Monsieur Perrotin following. In an instant everything was turned topsyturvy; cupboards ransacked, furniture displaced, the clothes torn from the beds and dashed on the floor, no possible place of concealment left unvisited—but all to no purpose; yet hastily as all this was done, it did not prevent Mr. Yates from observing the effect upon Monsieur Perrotin. Much to his disappointment, he read no fear of discovery in his countenance. It was clear, then, that advantage had been taken of the interval he had allowed Rachel for reflection. Inwardly cursing his own folly, he turned upon Monsieur Perrotin and began to bully. Unless he told

him what had become of the boy, he should go at once to the police.

A long night's consideration had reassured Monsieur Perrotin: he no longer feared the visit of Mrs. Scrope's emissary. For Rachel's sake, as well as for Walter's, it was better that neither of them should be on the spot, but when Mr. Yates threatened him with the police, he smiled.

"Listen to me, sir," he said. "Your insolent manners I pass over with contempt. They are not worthy of my notice; but in respect of what you say last, I give to you some instruction. In France, the person who violates the sanctity of a private domicile has reason himself to fear the police. That, sir, is your category. As to the rest, you come here, you tell me, to claim somebody's child. In that case, you are armed with all the proofs to make good your claim which the law of France requires! You have brought with you the certificate of marriage of the child's parents, the *acte de naissance*, where and how the child was born, the authority from the magistrate or state's officer to justify your demand—the signature to all those papers by the consul of your country in this city? If by some oversight you forget those so necessary documents, the justice of France shall laugh you in the face, as I! Or, perhaps, they do something more. They punish you for a false pretension. Now, sir, if you please, I accompany you to the public tribunal."

Monsieur Perrotin delivered this speech with perfect calmness and resolution. The more he had meditated, since his wife's departure, on the keeper's mission, the more he felt satisfied he had discovered its real object. If no sinister purpose had been at the bottom of it, Mrs. Scrope would have acted upon legal advice, and made her demand formally, in the manner he suggested. The character of her present agent, and the course adopted by him, convinced Monsieur Perrotin that he might safely appeal to the authority by which he was menaced.

For the first time in his life, Mr. Yates was thoroughly taken aback. After his interview with Rachel on the day before, he had never dreamt of opposition. Tears he could witness unmoved; to every form of entreaty he was deaf;

his callous soul cared nothing for woman's sorrow ; but the steady defiance of Monsieur Perrotin upset all his calculations. He felt that the poor, simple teacher of languages had penetrated his secret, and that what he told him was perfectly true.

For a few moments after Monsieur Perrotin had ceased speaking, the keeper stood glaring fiercely on him.

"Curse you !" at last he growled, "you'll get the worst of this. Remember, I tell you so !"

He shook his clenched fist in Monsieur Perrotin's face, turned on his heel, and left the room.

His reflections as he walked towards his hotel were anything but pleasant. What excuse could he make to Mrs. Scrope for having allowed Walter to escape when he had him so completely in his clutches ? But her anger was the least part of his care : there was the loss of the promised reward ! If he had succeeded in carrying off the boy, and lodging him safely in the vessel that was to take him to Australia, a thousand pounds would have been paid. And to lose this prize through his own negligence and stupidity ! He ought to have known that a woman's defence was always flight. Fool that he was to have given her the chance, instead of waiting and watching till he had secured his prey. What likelihood was there now of getting on Walter's track again ? If he applied to the police, he must tell a plausible story, to be afterwards substantiated—no easy matter with people of that description. He had been sent to work in the dark, and a single indiscreet word would throw a flood of light on Mrs. Scrope's affairs, and ruin the whole business. He must devise some other plan. Who was there that could help him ? The hotel commissioner ? Yes—he might, through his assistance, discover in what direction Rachel and Walter had gone. Persons of his calling were familiar with all the movements of the place—it was their trade ; besides, this Dufourmantelle knew the Perrotin family personally, and could make inquiry without exciting suspicion. But when the fact he wished to learn was ascertained, how far was the question advanced ? They had removed further into the interior—probably to Paris. Who could reach them there ? Ah ! the acquaintance he made yesterday might serve him now.

Auguste Mercier was the man! As soon as he had spoken to the commissioner he would seek him out.

It so happened that at the very time Mr. Yates was thinking of Monsieur Dufourmantelle, the latter was thinking of him, and by a still more remarkable coincidence, the subject of their thoughts was the same.

Had the commissioner encountered Walter on the previous day, he meant to have told him how his letter was disposed of, but owing to Rachel's precautions they did not meet. Next morning, in passing along the Rue des Carmes, remembering that Jules Vermeil saw his friend every day, Monsieur Dufourmantelle stopped at the confectioner's shop to leave a message for Walter. Neither father nor son were there, but in the *salon* he espied Mademoiselle Cécile sitting in a very pensive attitude.

The young lady had a very humid aspect, like the poet's rose "just washed in a shower"—

"The plentiful moisture encumber'd the flower,  
And weigh'd down its beautiful head—"

in other words, she looked as if she had been crying, and that very recently.

Monsieur Dufourmantelle apologized for the intrusion, but could he see her brother?

Mademoiselle Cécile turned upon him a very tearful gaze, and shook *her* "beautiful head."

Again the commissioner begged pardon; he feared that something unpleasant had occurred; he would immediately withdraw; his business with her brother was a mere trifle—simply to request him to tell Monsieur Walterre—

At this name, the flood of Mademoiselle Cécile's grief could no longer be restrained, and the tears fell thick and fast as she sobbingly said:

"Alas! monsieur, he is not here to tell anything! Both of them are gone!"

"Gone! Mon Dieu! What misfortune is this? Gone?"

"Yes, monsieur. To Paris."

"Oh, is that all, Mademoiselle Cécile? To Paris only! Every one goes there. That is only an absence of a few days."

"No, no!" cried the young lady, still weeping—"they

are gone perhaps for ever! I shall never see him again! Do you think he will come back?"

Ignorant of the circumstances of the case, Monsieur Dufourmantelle could not possibly give a decisive answer to this question, and he therefore asked Mademoiselle Cécile for an explanation. It was a relief to her to speak of the absent, and she told him the history of her bereavement—how papa and Jules, and Madame Perrotin and Walter, had all set out for Paris the night before—how she knew nothing of the intention till half an hour before they went—how she had cried all night—and how her life had become a burden, with many other lamentable words and images of desolation, from which Monsieur Dufourmantelle, skilled in such matters, drew the inference, without auscultation, that the confectioner's lovely daughter was suffering under a temporary disease of the heart. He consoled her as well as he could, and took his leave, full of wonder at the hasty exodus, of which he could not divine the cause. It was not only something to speculate upon, but a subject to talk about, and the first person to tell the story to was the English gentleman whom he had made acquainted with Walter's love affair.

It must be observed, *par parenthèse*, that Walter rose greatly in the commissioner's estimation when he pictured him winning the affections of two at a time. "Le petit gaillard!"—such was his approving phrase—"ça commence bien! Il en aura joliment sur les bras!"

On reaching the hotel, Monsieur Dufourmantelle heard that Mr. Yates was asking for him, and infinite was his delight at being able to supply the information required, with the additional intelligence imparted by Mademoiselle Cécile—for which he received a gratuity that surprised him—that the travellers were lodged in the house of a relation of Madame Vermeil, at No. 10 in the Rue Coq-héron, so that when monsieur delivered the letter to the charming miss herself, as he had promised, he could at the same time make known to her the writer's present address.

Having learnt all he wanted to know, Mr. Yates dispensed with the commissioner's further attendance, and lost no time in making his way to the *cabaret* in the "Champ de Foire aux Boissons." He found Auguste Mercier in a stable at the

back of the premises, engaged in the praiseworthy occupation of improving the appearance of a horse, which, without the embellishments he bestowed, would most likely remain on hand for a considerable length of time. The conversation which took place between the keeper and his newly-acquired friend was long and interesting, particularly to the horse-dealer, who, from the earnest-money put into his hands by Mr. Yates, saw a very good chance of realizing at least ten times the value of his notable Norman stud by the transaction now proposed. He admitted that Pont de l'Arche was not his constant place of residence—indeed, for reasons which he did not enter into, he frequently shifted his ground—and that he was more familiar with Paris than with his own bed—an assertion which those who knew his habits would be little inclined to doubt. He had, he said, many friends in the capital, and also—who has not?—a few enemies—chiefly among the class who in a certain polite society bear the appellation of *rousses* (police)—“people,” he observed, “whom nobody can esteem.” As to scruples, Monsieur Auguste Mercier had fewer, if possible, than Mr. Yates himself. Of this the last words of their conversation afforded ample proof.

“Which way would you like to have him—*alive* or *dead*?”

“If it was only me,” replied the keeper, “I should say *dead*—*dead* by all manner of means. But there’s another party to be considered—so I’m afraid we must say *alive*.”

“Comme vous voudrez,” said the other, with indifference; “ça m’est égal!”

And thereupon the two shook hands over their foul bargain, and parted,—Mr. Yates to report progress in England, the Norman to make progress in Paris.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### NEW FRIENDS IN PARIS.

CLOVIS was the name of Madame Vermeil’s relation in the Rue Coq-héron, though—not being an Irishman—he

laid no claim to royal descent on the strength of the illustrious appellation. Could he, indeed, have established such a pretension, it would have done him no great good in a worldly point of view, seeing that the doctrine of hereditary right has been more than once disturbed in France since the foundation of the first Christian dynasty. At all events, Noël Clovis never raised the claim, but accepted the name which his father had borne without troubling himself to ask where it came from, and contentedly followed the occupation of a dentist. He began his career, as a matter of course, with nothing; married while he still had nothing; lived with his wife Rosalie for many years, cheerfully, upon nothing; and, after the usual struggle, succeeded at length in realizing enough to admit of his enjoying a little of that pleasure which is so prominent an article in the French domestic code. Noël and Rosalie Clovis might perhaps have been happier had they not been childless, but two little things—their own images, so each said—born to them when they were very poor, and snatched away as soon as poverty left them, were never replaced, and this loss was often called to mind when both husband and wife were at the gayest. On the whole, however, they had few cares to vex them, and took life as it came, working hard all the week, and “profitant de leur Dimanche,” when the day came round, after the general fashion of Parisians.

If Noël Clovis still laboured in his vocation beyond the necessities of the case, he had two reasons for doing so. In the first place, he was skilful, and proud of his skill; in the next, he had a long-cherished project to accomplish—that of eventually becoming a landed proprietor, the privilege of shooting over his own grounds being the dearest wish of his heart.

We are most of us inoculated with some capricious fancy. I, for my own part, who haven't the slightest ear and don't know a note of music, constantly indulge in the dream of one day astonishing the world by playing on the violoncello better than Piatti; there are others, friends of mine, authors, artists, actors, orators—in *embryo*—and though they never have a chance of being anything else, cannot forego the idea that the impossible reputation which they court may yet be theirs. Of this kind was the aspiration

of Noël Clovis, the dentist. At a very early period he had been bitten by the mania for "le sport," and the plains of Bercy and Belleville had witnessed efforts of his in that line, which, in all probability, were never witnessed before; but no failure, however signal, had brought home to him the conviction that he was not destined by nature to shine as a sportsman.

The night train from Rouen to Paris was not a fast one, but although it was, according to custom, at least two hours behind time when Monsieur Vermeil and his party got out at the *embarcadère*, daylight had not yet broken. It was an awkward hour for arriving unexpectedly at a friend's house, but, as Monsieur Vermeil philosophically observed, no one could blame him for that; they ought to have been longer on the journey—he could have slept all the way—as, in fact, he did. Being there, however, the best thing to be done was to go as straight as the omnibus would take them to the Rue Coq-héron. That street was fortunately in the regular *course*, and the lumbering vehicle stopped at the door of Monsieur Clovis, his habitation being conspicuously shown by a projecting red lamp, on which the word "Dentiste" was inscribed.

Monsieur Vermeil got out of the omnibus and rang the bell,—once—twice,—and then a third time with somewhat increased energy. Before the last peal had done tingling, a window on the second floor flew open, and a voice, as if in a box somewhere, was heard:

"What do you want?"

"Parbleu!" was the reply. "I want you."

"Have you got the toothache?" squeaked the voice.

"No!" responded the applicant, adding, in a loud tone of triumph, "I never had it in my life."

"Then what do you want here?" interrogated the speaker from above.

"I want a bed, a breakfast, everything you've got to give," returned the speaker from below.

"Diable! I am not an innkeeper. Get away with you!"

And the window was angrily clapped to.

Monsieur Vermeil shouted, but in vain; the *conducteur* and omnibus driver both burst into a horse-laugh, the latter exclaiming, "Allons, monsieur, tirons le chausson." (Let us be off.)



Monsieur Vermeil, however, had not come so far to be disposed of thus easily; he tugged again at the bell, and once more the window opened.

"I counsel you," began the upper voice, in accents of menace, as if preparing to carry out some sinister design—"I coun—sel you——"

"What! don't you recognize me?" exclaimed the impatient traveller.

"Not at all," returned the wary citizen, opening the window a little wider, apparently for the purpose of giving himself more freedom of action.

The gray of morning had by this time rendered objects more visible, and Monsieur Vermeil, who was looking upwards, detected the dentist's fell purpose. He jumped nimbly off the *trottoir* into the road.

"For Heaven's sake, desist!" he cried; "I am the husband of your cousin, just arrived from Rouen."

"A la bonne heure!" returned the dentist, withdrawing his arm; "you spoke just in time. Are you Monsieur Vermeil?"

"Yes, my dear Clovis, I am indeed,—and here is my son, Jules, another of your cousins. You remember Jules! Come down and let us in!"

"Wait a moment," said the dentist; "I will be with you directly."

While Monsieur Vermeil, as he handed Rachel out of the omnibus, was apologizing for this detention, the owner of the house presented himself at the street door. He was a meagre little man, and shivered a good deal, for the morning air was fresh and his attire but scanty, a thin dressing-gown of *percale* being the only addition to his *costume de nuit*. At the sight of an unknown lady he hastily drew back, and would have closed the door if Monsieur Vermeil's foot had not prevented him. It was a long time since he had seen his wife's cousin, who, moreover, was travestied by his seal-skin cap and worsted comforter; Jules, too, had grown out of all knowledge, and, recollecting neither, he began to think the whole affair a *guet-apens*, a design to rob and murder, for he was of a timorous nature, and did not consider that people who mean robbery and murder seldom arrive in a railway omnibus with a waggon-load of baggage.

"Come, come, Clovis," said the Rouen confectioner, "your appearance is well enough. Madame will excuse stockings at this hour of the morning. Don't shut the door in our face!"

But the dentist still resisted, and from beyond his barrier cried out, "That lady is not my cousin!"

"Perhaps not," exclaimed a female voice from behind—"but the other is Adolphe Vermeil. I know his voice. Run upstairs, my friend, and put on your things. There, go!"

It was Madame Clovis who had interposed. She had hastily dressed herself while her husband was parleying at the window, and came in time to redeem the credit of her house's hospitality.

In the twinkling of an eye she had embraced the confectioner on both cheeks, performed the like operation on Jules and Walter, and curtsying to Rachel, held out her hand.

"Madame Perrotin," said Monsieur Vermeil, in explanation, "is an English lady—an old friend of ours: to her son here I am indebted for the life of mine. We have come suddenly from Rouen on business of importance, and for the moment, Madame Clovis, we are in want of houseroom. Can you afford it?"

"Certainly, my cousin—certainly. But where are Madame Vermeil and your daughter? Ah, you have left them at Rouen! So much the worse. We have plenty of room for everybody. Madame, will you do me the honour to walk in? You shall have breakfast directly. Ah, how fatigued you must be! Let me take these things! Come here, Clovis, my friend, and help to carry something. Where are Florine and Madeleine? Send them quickly!"

The bustling activity of Madame Clovis soon set matters to rights. Florine, the housemaid, and Madeleine, the cook, hurried down, and in their wake came Monsieur Clovis, now fully arrayed and eager to obliterate the impression created by his first reception of the travellers. All the lighter articles were at once removed by the dentist's household, and the heavier ones—some of them heavy enough, in all conscience—became the load of a sturdy Auvergnat who had just seated himself on one of the stone pillars of the *porte-cochère* next door, against which, when not employed,

he lounged throughout the day. Madame Clovis swept off Rachel and Walter, her husband followed with Jules, and Monsieur Vermeil brought up the rear amid a clatter and confusion which can only be likened to the effect of a sudden incursion into a well-stocked poultry-yard. It mattered little to Madame Clovis—indeed, she never gave herself the time to think—whether Rachel understood her or not; all she cared for was to make her welcome in the best way she could, and by the time they reached the top of the staircase the whole party felt as much at home as if they had lived together all their lives.

Neither did Rachel nor Walter find reason to change their opinion when the more serious part of their business in Paris came to be discussed. The little dentist had a large heart, and it beat quicker than usual when he heard of Madame Perrotin's trouble, while his kind wife's eyes moistened with tears at the thoughts of Rachel's child being claimed by a stranger. All, of course, was not told—for that there was no present occasion—but quite enough to interest Monsieur and Madame Clovis in Walter's story, and Rachel soon satisfied herself that if she were able to carry out the intention she had formed, she might safely leave her boy under the charge of friends so warm and true. The expense he might put them to was her chief difficulty, but a twofold declaration released her from that anxiety. In the first place, Monsieur Clovis vowed that if money were made a condition he would then and there destroy himself with his best double-barrelled gun—the *chef-d'œuvre*, he remarked parenthetically, of the celebrated *armurier* Lepage; and in the next, Monsieur Vermeil was quite as strenuous in asserting that, as to pecuniary affairs, he was more deeply indebted to Monsieur Perrotin—for teaching—than his wife had any idea of—and that the settlement of all matters of business rested with him alone. This conclusion, then, was adopted: Jules and Walter were to be left for a time to the care of Monsieur and Madame Clovis, Monsieur Vermeil returning with Madame Perrotin to Rouen. Rachel's design was to ascertain if the statement made by Yates respecting Edith's death were true; in that case, she resolved at once to appeal to Lady Tunstall—but if she found that Walter's mother still lived, then, at whatever risk or toil, she would

find her out, and trust to Heaven and her good cause for the recovery of her darling's birthright!

Of the feasting and the sight-seeing that engrossed the inmates of Numero Dix, Rue Coq-héron, during the two days that Monsieur Vermeil and Madame Perrotin remained in Paris, it does not need to speak. Fairly recorded, it would fill a volume, half of which, perhaps, would be taken up by the marvellous narrative told by Monsieur Clovis—and always told by him when under the influence of sparkling wine—of how he made the discovery, on the day he first shot *at* a partridge, that the relation between the sitting game and the pointing dog—the reason why the one remains quiet and the other stands still—arises from magnetic influence!

All we shall say is, that at the end of those two days the party broke up, and the directing agent of God's will, which men call Fate, was left to shape their separate courses.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A SPORTING CITIZEN.

Not for the first time in his young life did Walter now reflect upon the peculiarity of his position. When he reflected that almost all the boys with whom he was in the habit of associating had either parents or near relations, it did not fail to strike him that he alone had no one with whom he could claim kindred. An orphan he might be; others of his acquaintance were orphans also; yet they had somebody to whom they belonged to talk about, while he was obliged to be wholly silent. It was true that no mother could have loved her child more fondly than Rachel loved Walter; true that he received every kindness at the hands of Monsieur Perrotin; but, besides that neither ever gave him the name of son, there was something of deference in their affection which he intuitively felt to be contrary to the course of nature, and for what was withheld he deeply yearned. The most painful sense of his isolation arose after

his meeting with Mary Tunstall; but although she evidently moved in a sphere far above that in which he was placed, Walter could not divest himself of the idea that he had a right—was it instinct or love?—to stand upon equal terms with her. True blood never belies itself, and Walter was ambitious too. It was not the difference of rank that troubled him, but the fear of never seeing her again; and now, under the circumstances of his removal from Rouen, the chances against another meeting seemed more remote than ever. Yet he had one hope. In the letter which Dufourmantelle had undertaken to forward, Walter had poured out all his heart. Surely to that letter Mary Tunstall would reply! Poor boy! This was all he had to trust to! At Walter's age, however, this hope was much; and, secretly sustained by it, he cheerfully adapted himself to his new mode of life.

Setting aside the fact that Walter was separated from those he loved most, the difficulty of making a home with the dentist and his wife was not so very great, for they were the kindest people in the world. Being without children, and having known what it was to lose them, they welcomed the accession to their family of Walter and Jules as if they had been their own children restored.

The tastes of Madame Clovis were more domestic than happens to be the case with nine Frenchwomen out of ten, added to which she was *un peu dévote*; but these inclinations did not cause her to frown on out-of-doors' amusements, or despise the adornment of a new bonnet. To be sure, the bonnet might have been worn at church, thus reconciling piety and fashion, but then, as Madame Clovis said, everybody did not go to Saint-Eustache, which was her parish, and if one wanted to be seen, one must sometimes show oneself elsewhere. It was on this principle, no doubt, that Madame Clovis consented to accompany her husband now and then to the *fêtes* of Saint-Cloud, Montmorency, Asnières, Prés-Saint-Gervais, and so forth; and it was, perhaps, scarcely a departure from this principle if she did not refuse to join him when Arnal played a new part at the Variétés, or Frédéric Lemaître appeared as the hero of a drama in four-and-twenty acts at the Porte St. Martin. If people don't wear bonnets at the theatre,

at all events when they go there they dress themselves decently!

In the *fêtes* and other amusements Monsieur Clovis willingly participated, but at Saint-Eustache he was not a very regular attendant. Clerical matters, indeed, were not his *forte*, as may be inferred from a remark he once made to his wife on the subject of Christmas-day, the holiday on which he was born. "Tu fais beaucoup de cas de Noël, mon amie! C'est parce que c'est mon jour de fête?" When enlightened as to the actual fact, he replied: "Ah, je n'y pensais pas. C'est bien drôle!" But, as I have already intimated, the *spécialité* of Monsieur Clovis was sporting. The proof of its predominance in his thoughts was everywhere made manifest in his home. Take the family *salon* as an example:

To begin with the walls. They were papered in compartments representing every variety of the sportsman's occupation. You saw there huntsmen on fiery steeds sweeping through forest glades and winding tremendous horns, with the hounds *following* in full cry, and the stag bounding away in the distance. There was the shooting sportsman bringing down birds of every plumage, and surrounded by dogs of all colours and descriptions, orange and blue being the tints preferred, and something between pointers and poodles the animals represented. There was the fisherman with his line and the fisherman with his net, heedless of each other's pursuit, and sedulously at work on the same water. There was a steeple-chase at the Croix de Berny, with the winner in mid-air clearing a river as wide as the Thames at Richmond; and a race at Chantilly, in which all the English "jokeis"—known by their scarlet jackets—were irretrievably distanced, the tricoloured victor reaching the goal amidst the patriotic exclamations of a handkerchief-waving, hat-lifting multitude. Between each compartment hung the *spolia opima* of the field and forest: a wild boar's head, garnished with enormous tusks, glared savagely from a bracket in one corner; its *pendant* had been furnished by a wolf with fangs no less ferocious; the fox had contributed his brush, the hare its foot, the otter, the badger, the ferret, and the weasel their respective skins. There were also numerous glass-cases containing admirably-

stuffed pheasants, partridges, quails, woodcocks, and wild-fowl—all trophies, of course, won by the double-barrelled gun of Monsieur Clovis, which was suspended conspicuously above one of the *consoles*; but I must let the reader into a little secret; they were trophies procured at the very respectable establishment of Monsieur Furet, the purveyor of live game in the corner of the Place de la Madeleine, in whose courtyard, at the back of his premises, all except the wild boar and the wolf had been shot. Monsieur Furet was a very discreet personage, and in this way accommodated a good many Parisian sportsmen besides Monsieur Clovis. An unsuccessful day's sport at Saint-Denis or Neuilly was compensated for by a *battue* at Monsieur Furet's, where the expert marksman could select what game he pleased, and bring it down at any range from ten yards to five—at the risk, it is true, of occasionally blowing the birds to pieces. It was impossible for Madame Clovis not to believe that her husband was the crack shot he boasted of being when he came home with his game-bag so well filled, and it was with triumph quite equal to his own, and probably of a more genuine character, that she pointed to the least shattered specimens which, after displaying them at home, the dentist always took to Monsieur Furet's to be stuffed. To complete the history of these spoils, it must be added that there was a date affixed to every object, so that the most incredulous of the prowess of Monsieur Clovis—if any there were—must at once have been convinced; and that no one might languish in vain to know what manner of man it was who had performed exploits so fertile in their results, the full-length portrait of Monsieur Clovis, painted by Ganache, a first-rate artist, hung at the lower end of the apartment, facing a long pier-glass opposite, by which means a twofold image accrued of the inimitable sportsman.

Let me describe this picture.

I have said that Monsieur Clovis was a meagre little man, but Ganache was one of those daring sons of genius who refuse to be tied down to literal interpretation. The ideal entered largely into all his compositions, and though he scorned to flatter—his self-respect would not permit that—Monsieur Clovis appeared on his canvas at least six feet high, and with thews and sinews befitting a slayer of wolves

and wild boars—a departure from what was strictly accurate, which, while it was highly agreeable to the original, could, without doubt, have been justified by the painter on the ground that imaginary deeds are but represented by an imaginary hero. After all, it was not the mere man that Ganache strove to depict; his aim was to exhibit the sportsman, and for this purpose he had taken care to adhere with scrupulous fidelity to every detail of costume, developing in this respect a principle universally recognized on the walls of our own cherished Academy. Monsieur Clovis, then, appeared in one of those seductive shooting-coats which collect so many gazers before Frogé's window on the Boulevard Italien, a coat of unrecognizable tartan pattern, and ornamented with mother-of-pearl buttons the size of cheese-plates, on which sporting subjects are always engraved; beneath this garment stole forth the flaps of a scarlet waistcoat, supplying the artist with the inevitable bit of red; his nether limbs were encased in symmetrical doe-skin pantaloons that were met at the knee by well-shaped dark-brown leggings; on his feet were putty-coloured *brodequins*; a green *casquette* with a very wide peak was thrown back from his manly forehead; across his shoulders was slung a *gibecière* of network curiously fringed, between the meshes of which were seen the fur and feathers of countless heads of game; his vigorous right hand grasped the death-dealing Lepage, his left was extended towards utmost space, as much as to say—such, at least, was the purpose of Ganache—that the fame of the sporting dentist had spread throughout the universe, and the face of that individual was turned full upon the spectator with an expression which confirmed the painter's intention. The accessories to this highly-finished portrait were Tonto and Médor, the favourite dogs of Monsieur Clovis, the first, in a crisp attitude, severely pointing at a half-concealed partridge, and the second retrieving a brilliant pheasant; a dead rabbit lay in the foreground, and a lurid sky, pregnant with thunder and lightning, filled up the distance.

The conversation of Monsieur Clovis naturally savoured of the subject which chiefly interested him, though a curious observer might have noticed that his eloquence was always most descriptive where he fancied his auditors were least



informed. Madame Clovis came in, of course, for a very large share in the history of his sporting adventures, and when Walter and Jules were added to his household, it may easily be supposed that they did not escape. Jules had great faith in these narratives, but Walter entertained opinions to which he gave no tongue, certain reminiscences of early life that clung to his memory being considerably at variance with the statements of the dentist-sportsman. Monsieur Clovis would fain have given his young friends the immediate benefit of his sporting experience, but this branch of instruction was of necessity postponed to a more convenient season, and in accordance with Monsieur Verneil's desire, arrangements were forthwith made for entering the boys at the Collège Royal de Charlemagne in the Rue Saint-Antoine, whither they were sent as day-boarders.

While they are prosecuting their studies, we turn aside to follow the footsteps of Rachel.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### RACHEL'S MISSION.

RACHEL'S first object, on her return to Rouen, was to discuss with Monsieur Perrotin the project she had formed of endeavouring to ascertain whether Matthew Yates had spoken truth or not when he intimated that Edith was dead. This knowledge could only be arrived at in England; and thither she determined to go.

Monsieur Perrotin was scarcely less anxious about Walter than herself, and the question was earnestly debated between them. The teacher of languages was very unwilling to part with his wife; he had also fears for her safety, should Mrs. Scrope come to know that she had returned; but Rachel promised to act with the greatest caution, and eventually he consented to her departure.

She thought it a happy omen for the success of her journey that on the evening before she set out, a letter reached her from Walter. It was written in high spirits, expressed

much gratitude for the kindness of Madame Clovis, contained a good many sly hits at the little dentist, whose peculiarities very much amused him, and overflowed with remembrances to all his friends in Rouen. The last lines were as follows:—

“And now, dearest Rachel, I must say good-by, for breakfast is over, and Jules and I make our first appearance this morning at the College, which is some distance from here, and the way to it—which Monsieur Clovis will show us—lies through some of the oldest and strangest streets in Paris. We have been there once already to see the place, and as I looked up at the tall, grim houses, the tops of which are almost out of sight, I could not help thinking that there must be some terrible secret hidden in every room. I thought, too, that there were secrets out of doors, and that I was one of them. Oh, dearest Rachel, forgive me for saying so, but I sadly want to know something about my father and mother. If my asking you does not make you angry, you will tell me some day—won’t you? You are the darling of my heart, and always will be—you, *and one other person whom I can’t forget*—so you need not be afraid that I shall love you less *if I had twenty fathers and mothers!* God bless you. Your ever affectionate Walter.”

“Poor thing!” said Rachel, drying her eyes, “it is very natural he should ask. But to think of his doing so at the moment I am going to England to find out all I can! He may well call himself a secret, with his father cast away and drowned before he was born, and his poor mother never allowed to know the dear boy had ever breathed. But she shall know it, please God, if she is still alive on the face of the earth! Walter may have somebody to be proud of yet.”

Rachel had only one acquaintance left in London—her husband’s old friend, Mr. William Partridge, and to the White Bear, Piccadilly, she proceeded immediately on her arrival in town. The promised visit to the Perrotins of the jovial innkeeper and his wife had never been paid, but had not been forgotten, as Mr. Partridge himself explained.

“Well, I *am* glad to see you, madam,” he said, shaking her heartily by the hand. “Six years! Lord, you don’t say so! How the time does fly! And you’re looking as fresh and bloomin’ as ever! You needn’t to blush, madam,

only you may if you like, it don't do you no harm, do it, Mrs. P.? And how's musseer? Glad to hear it. And the little one? Grown quite a big boy like my eldest, Tom, there! You remember Tom, madam—he was a little chap in a pinafore? At College, in Paris, and speaks French like a native! There, Mrs. P., think of that! Ah! I might have done the same, if musseer had stayed. I did take to it uncommon. I must have a try at the lingo again some day. Well, we have been meanin' to run over, but somethin' has hindered us every summer, and winter, you know, is out of the question with folks in our line. It's been Mrs. P.'s fault mostly. Yes, you may shake your head, Sally, but it's true. Haven't we eight of 'em now, and don't they always come when marrowfats is in season? That's the youngest, madam, only two months. But you'll take somethin'? A plate of gravy or ox-tail, or a ham-and-beef sandwich? Yes, you shall; Mrs. P. was cuttin' of a sandwich as you come in. Pale or brown sherry? Too strong! Not a bit of it. Do you all the good in the world. Stay your stomach till dinner-time. Here's your good health, madam, and musseer's, and the young gentleman's. Wish they both was here!"

Such was the welcome given by Mr. Partridge, and it was seconded by his comely but somewhat exuberant helpmate; for they who are called within the bar—of an hotel—have a tendency to increase their bulk, against which the most abstinent resolves are vain.

In the evening, when the bustle of the house was over, when the tea-table was set out for the ladies, and Mr. Partridge's pipe and punch were both smoking, Rachel, at the instance of her friends, entered into some particulars concerning the business which brought her to England.

Although more than sixteen years had elapsed since Monsieur Perrotin got down from the roof of the Portsmouth coach at the door of the White Bear, Mr. Partridge had a distinct recollection of the occurrence, or, as he pertinently observed, "he had it then and there, right afore his eyes, at that moment;" he also remembered—for waiters, like gaolers and tailors, have long memories—the fine, handsome young officer who was Monsieur Perrotin's companion; but "he couldn't have believed, if he hadn't been told"—so

ran his speech—that Walter was the son of the aforesaid handsome officer by a runaway marriage with a young lady of birth and fortune, and not Rachel's child!

His astonishment was not shared by Mrs. Partridge, who declared that "now madam mentioned the circumstance, she didn't mind saying that she never *had* thought there was any likeness between madam and the little boy; but more than that, she had never ventured to suppose, for madam knew that likenesses were arbitrary."

Rachel assured them both that what she had stated was the fact; and not limiting herself to half-confidence, but relying on their secrecy, as she trusted she might, went on to mention the names of Walter's parents; nor closed her story till she had related everything. Promises of all the assistance they could render were sincerely offered by her host and hostess in return for this communication.

"In dealing with this here kind of thing," said Mr. Partridge, sentimentously, waving his pipe as he spoke, "madam oughtn't to expose herself too fur, but at the same time she must keep on the *quivvy*—the look-out, Mrs. P.—you understand. Now hotel-keepers, in a largish way of business like me, has many opportunities of picking up information in a promiscuous sort of way, what with regular customers, chance travellers, and so forth. There's an old acquaintance of mine, too, the superintendent of the Vine-street station close by, which he often drops in of an evening to take a friendly glass in this here parlour, he'd be a useful man at a pinch; it's surprisin' how much he knows of great people's affairs; one would be half inclined to fancy, to hear him talk, that *they* now and then went wrong like other folks; not that they do, you know—oh no—madam can tell us better than that, can't she, Mrs. P.? He'd soon find out this Mister Yates, and keep an eye upon him as long as ever was wanted, and bring him up with a round turn just at the right moment. Oh, he's a wonderful sharp fellow is Wormwood! I don't suppose there's his equal in the whole force. As you were remarkin' of, madam, Lady Tunstall must know where her sister is, providin' nothin' has happened. What says the Royal Red Book? Hand it over, my dear. Let me see: 'Tunks'—'Tunno'—'Tunstall'—ay, here's the town-house—'Tunstall, Sir James, Bart.,

50, Belgrave-square.' Whether they're in town or no is easily found out."

Mr. Partridge rang for the porter, who received his instructions and returned in the course of an hour with the intelligence, which he had obtained from an under-housemaid, the only party on the premises, that "her people was dispersed about in different places—Sir James in the 'ighlands, shooting, and my lady down in Yorkshire, at Scargill 'all, staying with my lady's mother;" about any other members of the family the party could give no information.

Rachel's journey was, thus, defined; but to achieve her purpose she must run into the lion's mouth. No matter; she was ready to undertake anything for Walter's sake, and decided on leaving London the next morning, though her hospitable friends begged of her to remain at least another day, Mr. Partridge holding out the lure of a regular evening at Vauxhall. When he found, however, that his guest was proof against even this temptation, he promised to lose no time in putting Mr. Wormwood in possession of Matthew Yates's designs against Walter, never doubting that sooner or later the astute superintendent would catch him tripping.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE ENVOY IN DANGER.

If the change in the mode of conveyance was great since Rachel first travelled towards Scargill, still greater was the change which had taken place in her own fortunes and in the fortunes of those with whom she was associated. Edith Scrope married, widowed, and married again—her child an outcast—and herself an exile, now furtively returning to the scene of all their early sorrows, with nothing to sustain her but the courage which had its source in the depths of her own tenderness and womanly devotion.

As the train swept on between Northallerton and Darlington, past places whose names she still remembered, how vividly she recalled the events of her former journey, and

dwelt upon the consequences they entailed : upon Edith's elopement, her separation from the husband of an hour, her solitary life at Scargill, Walter's birth and the twofold be-reavement of his unhappy mother, and, most of all, upon the inflexible cruelty of Mrs. Scrope ! Was the punishment, asked Rachel, of one imprudent act to last for ever ? Surely, after long suffering, even on earth there was mercy !

At Darlington, Rachel left the rail, which at that time went no farther in the direction she was travelling, and crossed by the coach to Barnard Castle, the nearest town to Scargill. It was too late when she got there to proceed any farther that evening, and she resolved to stop for the night at the inn where the coach put up.

The house was of modest pretensions, and served chiefly for the accommodation of market-folks and wayfarers. It stood in the lower part of the town, close to the bridge over the Tees ; and in this respect was well suited to the class of persons who frequented it. The large common room, into which Rachel was shown on her arrival, contained only one person besides the landlady—an elderly woman—and her daughter, a tall handsome girl of about twenty. This person was a clumsy, heavy-looking young man, who sat upon a bench near the fireplace, leaning against the wall asleep ; his head hung upon his breast, showing very little of his face, but a good deal of a large pair of coarse red ears, which stuck out from beneath a close-fitting worsted cap. He was dressed like a labourer, and was either fatigued with his day's work or overcome by ale, an empty mug standing on the bench beside him.

Noticing the sleeper, and not much liking his appearance, Rachel asked the landlady if there was no other room, and, being answered in the negative, begged, as she was hungry, that what they were able to give her for supper might be placed in a corner of the room, and that her bedchamber might be got ready. The landlady attended herself to the first request, and Phillis, her daughter, to the second.

The fare that was set before Rachel was simple enough, consisting only of an oatmeal cake, some hard white cheese, a can of butter-milk, and a half-cut "berry" pie ; but appetite made even such food welcome, and she was still occupied with her supper when another man entered.

By this time it was almost dark, and from the place where Rachel sat she could only discern that he was of middle height and sturdily made. He did not approach her corner, but went up to the landlady, and saying he was very thirsty, asked for a glass of ale.

At the sound of his voice, which grated harshly in her ears, a strange, unpleasant sensation came over Rachel. She fancied she had heard the voice before, but where she could not call to mind; and she strained her eyes in vain to make out his features.

Having finished his ale, the man spoke again.

"What," he said, "has become of your daughter, mistress?"

"Oh," replied the landlady, "t' lass is nobbut gaun upstairs. 'She'll be down by directly."

And, indeed, she came into the room before her mother had done speaking.

"Ah, my dear," said the man, going up to her with outstretched hand, "I missed you. What do you think? I fancied you'd gone to the fair."

"Thou wert wrang, then, master," returned Phillis, coldly; and, taking no notice of the proffered hand, she went to a window-seat behind her mother.

"You are cross to-night, Phillis," said the man.

"Maybe," was her answer. "I'm not bound to girn at every fule I meet."

"Why should you be cross with me?"

"Ah, why?" chimed in her mother; "what's coom over t' lass? The gentleman has always been fair-spoken enough to thee, I reckon!"

The girl muttered something, which Rachel, though she was listening attentively, could not catch. More and more the disagreeable feeling had grown upon her while the stranger was speaking.

"Look here, mistress," he continued, taking something from his pocket, which glittered as the light from the window fell upon it—"look here! I looked in at the fair myself, as I came home, and didn't forget you or your pretty daughter either. I've got fairings for both of you."

"Ear-rings!" exclaimed the landlady. "My,—but they're bonny! They must have cost a sight o' brass!"

"Pooh!" was the answer. "Nothing to speak of. You've made me so comfortable since I've been staying here, it's the least I can do. Won't you follow your mother's example, Phillis?"

"Mother may e'en do as she likes," replied Phillis. "I want no ear-rings. Thou hadst better keep 'em for somebody else!"

"That's a poor return for well-meant kindness," said the stranger. "I was in hopes——"

His speech was interrupted by a noise which made him turn quickly round. The young man who was asleep by the fireplace had gradually slipped away from the wall, and losing his balance, woke up suddenly: in trying to save himself, he knocked down the empty mug, which was dashed to pieces on the stone floor.

"Ey, lad!" shouted the landlady, "thou'st broke more than thou canst pay for, I reckon!"

The fellow rose, rubbed his eyes, looked about him stupidly, and then moved towards the door, as if with the intention of solving the problem of payment by bolting; but the mistress of the house stood in his way.

"Nay, nay," she cried, "thou munna gang that gate! Yon mug cost me a shilling. Hast got one?"

The fellow shook his head. "T' yall," he said, "took my last toopence. I haven't nowt!"

"I thowt as much," observed the landlady; "who's to pay, then, for thy breakings, thou hauf-wit?"

"I will," interposed the stranger, who evidently wished to propitiate the fair Phillis's mother. "Here," he continued, "is the money. And as you've nearly frightened him out of his senses, give him another glass of ale, and I'll pay for that too. What's your name, man?"

"Charley Marston," answered the rustic, with a grin; "but I'm mostly called 'Loll.'"

"Well, Loll," said the other, "I'll call you so too; it's shorter. Now pick up the pieces, and don't do any more mischief."

To assist him in his task the landlady lit a candle. As she crossed in front of the stranger, the light fell full upon him, and to Rachel's indescribable terror she recognized Matthew Yates!



She dropped her knife and fork and uttered a half-suppressed cry.

"Who have you got there?" said Mr. Yates, shading his eyes with his hand. "I didn't see her before!"

Rachel bent her head down quickly, and completely concealed her face.

The landlady explained that Rachel had just arrived by the coach, and was staying in the house for the night. Mr. Yates turned away, and, nothing daunted by the reception he had met with from Phillis, began to talk to her again, while her mother went up to Rachel to ask if she wished for anything.

"Nothing, thank you," she answered faintly—"only I don't feel very well; I am rather tired with to-day's journey, and should like to go to bed."

"Nay, but you haven't eat half a supper. Try some more o' t' berry pie! A gill o' brandy would do you good."

Rachel declined both offers; her sole desire was to leave the room unperceived by Matthew Yates. If he discovered her, it was death to all her hopes. Should she follow the landlady up-stairs while he was engaged, as she saw, with Phillis? But to do so she must pass very near him, for he was standing close to the doorway, and a single glance might detect her, now that a light was burning. After a moment's hesitation, she decided upon another course.

"I wish," she said, "to speak to your daughter. Will you tell her so?"

The message was delivered, and Phillis, glad to be released, came quickly to her, without bestowing a word on Mr. Yates, who threw himself moodily into a chair, and began beating the devil's tattoo.

"You are persecuted and annoyed by that man?" said Rachel, in a low but distinct whisper.

Phillis looked as if she did not quite understand.

"I mean," continued Rachel, in the same earnest yet subdued tone—"I mean that you don't like him."

"Like him," repeated Phillis, "I fancy not, indeed! I could as lief like a toad."

"Neither do I like him. Come nearer. I have every reason to hate, and, at the same time, to fear him. He has it in his power to do me a great deal of harm. This meeting

is quite accidental, and he does not yet suspect who I am. Will you help me to get out of the room without his seeing me?"

Phillis smiled and nodded. "Leave it to me," she replied. "When I beckon, get up and follow me out o' t' room."

"Mother," she said, returning to her former place, "t' lady's well tired out. Give me t' light while I show her up to bed."

She took the candle, and standing between Matthew Yates and the door, signed to Rachel, who rose and dropped her veil over her face, but did not immediately advance.

The girl observing her hesitation, made a peculiar movement with her lips, and looked at the light in her hand. Rachel saw her meaning, and came forward trembling, for the gloomy face of Matthew Yates was turned towards her, and behind him stood the man called Loll, who put down his glass to stare at her; but at the second step she took, out went the light, and the room was left in almost total darkness.

"Plague o' t' wind," exclaimed Phillis; "here, mother, set light t' 't again; best put it into t' lantern."

As Phillis spoke, Rachel drew close to the door.

"T' wind, lass!" grumbled the landlady. "'Twas thy fondness did it! There's not a breath stirring!"

The obscurity favoured Rachel's escape; but it also favoured something else. At the moment she thought herself safe, a strong arm caught her round the waist and dragged her backwards. She felt she was in a man's embrace, but had hardly time to think so before a shower of hot kisses fell on her neck, and words of love from Matthew Yates were poured in her ear.

As Rachel struggled to get free, her bonnet fell off; she feared to cry out; and, misinterpreting the reason, Yates drew her closer to his breast. Again she strove with all her might, for now the ruffian was trying to turn her face to his.

"Villain! let me go," she gasped.

The effect of her words was instantaneous; the fellow's hold relaxed, and the hand that had clasped her waist pushed her violently away. At the same instant the light reappeared. Rachel caught up her bonnet and veil, and rushed

into the passage. She was quickly followed by Phillis, and, together, they went up-stairs. On reaching her bedroom, Rachel threw herself into a chair, and fell back, fainting.

Phillis sprinkled cold water on her face; but it was some minutes before she revived. At last she opened her eyes, and looked round with a terrified air.

"Is he here?" she asked.

"There's no one here but me," answered Phillis. "What mak's you tak' on so? You've been sore scared!"

"And with good cause," said Rachel. "I was mistaken for you just now."

"For me, ma'm,—how?"

Rachel told Phillis what had happened.

The girl's eyes sparkled with indignation.

"Did he think to get i' t' dark what he hasn't—free as he is—daured to ask i' t' light? But he wanted to harm you, ma'am. I'm sad sorry to know it."

"Ah!" said Rachel, with a deep sigh, "he does, indeed, seek to harm me. Tell me, Phillis, how long have you known this man?"

"Meaning Master Wood?"

"I mean the person we were speaking of. His name is not Wood, but Yates."

"'Deed! Then he miscalls himself, for he said his name was Wood."

Rachel thought that very likely, but wished for an answer to her question. Phillis then told her all she knew.

He came to the inn, she said, one afternoon, about two weeks previously, and, having hired her mother's chaise, drove out to Bowes. There he left the chaise, and the driver waited two or three hours till he returned. He supped and slept at the inn that night, and went away early next morning; nor did Phillis see any more of him till three days back, when he reappeared, and set off for Bowes as before, returning not only to sleep, but to take up his quarters for a while. He was absent every day for a few hours, but passed the rest of his time in the house, following Phillis about, and talking to her, when they were alone, in a way she did not like. He had plenty of money, he said, and would make a lady of her if she would go away with him

to foreign parts. Phillis gave him no encouragement, but her mother did, and scolded her for not being civil. Some folks were covetous, and did not care who their daughters married, provided they got rich husbands. That was it. Geordy Walker might be poor, but nobody could say anything worse of him. He had kept company with Phillis better than a twelvemonth, her mother knew she was promised, and now, because a man with a long purse came in the way—a man old enough to be her father—she wanted Phillis to have him and break off with poor Geordy. Phillis shed tears at the thought. But the softer mood was not of long duration. Her anger speedily rose when Matthew Yates was spoken of.

For the second time since her return to England, Rachel found herself under the necessity of giving her confidence to a friend but newly acquired. She described Matthew Yates in his true colours, as the unscrupulous agent of those who gave him hire; he was secretly connected with the family history of a lady of great wealth and influence in that part of the country; he was down there then, she did not doubt, on account of matters which concerned the lady in question; they concerned Rachel too, and it was everything for her to avoid coming into contact with him. Could Phillis tell her of any place near Barnard Castle where she might remain without running the risk of being seen by him?

The girl considered for a few minutes with rather a perplexed air. Suddenly, however, her countenance cleared. Geordy Walker had an aunt who lived in a small cottage in the West Gill, not far from his own farm. It was twelve or thirteen miles off, but Phillis could easily send a messenger, and if he started at daybreak, Geordy could be at Barnard Castle by breakfast-time. Meanwhile, Phillis would take care that nobody came near Rachel but herself. Comforted by this assurance, Rachel took leave of Phillis for the night, and the latter went back to the room below.

Matthew Yates looked at her fixedly as she entered, and her mother asked her why she had been gone so long?

The lady, Phillis replied, was so fatigued by the length of her journey, that she had been obliged to help to undress her; she was poorly, besides, and Phillis had advised her to lie in bed late next morning.

There was nothing in her manner to indicate any knowledge of what had taken place when the light was extinguished; nevertheless, Yates did not feel quite satisfied. The stranger lady might, perhaps, have been withheld from speaking by shame; but still what so natural as for one woman to make this kind of revelation to another? That the person whom he had insulted resented his conduct, was proved by her words even more than by her resistance. Decidedly the lines of Mr. Yates, as far as regarded the fair sex, had not latterly fallen in pleasant places. Such an issue as that described always raises curiosity, and he began to wonder who and what sort of person she might be with whom he had been *aux prises*. In the midst of this speculation his eye fell on something white which was lying on the floor beneath his feet. It was a pocket-handkerchief, which had also fallen in the struggle, and which Rachel had not observed in her hurry to leave the room. True to the habits of inquiry which were his second nature, Yates picked up the handkerchief and put it in his pocket, with the intention of examining it at leisure. That leisure was soon afforded him; for on looking round, he found that Phillis was no longer there. He therefore drew the handkerchief out again, and raised each corner for inspection. Three of them were blank; but on the fourth a name appeared, reversed, in very fine handwriting. He turned the handkerchief eagerly, and, to his utter astonishment, he read the name of "Rachel Perrotin" at full length!

Walter's marking, of which she had been so proud, had betrayed her!

Yates now remembered the shyness of the stranger lady; he could account for the extinction of the light; the epithet applied to himself was not the mere impulse of the moment. What was her motive in coming into Yorkshire, the part of the world which she had every reason for shunning? He must keep a watch upon her until he had received his orders from Mrs. Scrope.

The countryman Loll still lingered in the room. Yates motioned him to approach. He soon ascertained that the fellow was homeless, and by the offer of a bed and a supper, with the promise of something more hereafter, bound him at once to his service. What he immediately wanted, Yates

did not explain on the spot, but took him outside for the purpose. The duty he enjoined was not difficult. While absent himself next morning, Loll's business was to loiter near the inn door, and if the lady now sleeping up-stairs left the house, to follow her wherever she went, reporting everything to him on his return.

Poor Rachel was again in the toils !

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A PLACE OF REFUGE.

THAT the messenger despatched by Phillis had been diligent and faithful was shown by the early hour at which Geordy Walker reached Barnard Castle. The first object he saw as he entered the town was Phillis herself at one of the upper windows of the Brig-gate Inn; and so intently was he looking at her, that he nearly caused a mishap. A lover, with his mistress full before his eyes, may be pardoned for not keeping on the right side of the road; from which circumstance it arose that Geordy Walker's spring-cart was within an ace of upsetting into the Tees a lighter vehicle, against which he drove while crossing the bridge. The pleasant thoughts which the sight of Phillis had awakened were, for the moment, rudely put to flight by a loud oath, and, turning his head, Geordy saw the scowling face of the man against whom he had driven. Geordy backed his own horse as quickly as he could; but his promptness did not save him from another curse as the angry traveller pushed by.

"I'd teach thee manners, for as big as thou art," said Geordy, "if I hadn't something better to do. Who's o' that chaise, lad?" he asked of a countryman that was lounging at the bridge-foot.

The countryman couldn't, or rather wouldn't tell; for it was Loll, Matthew Yates's spy, whom Geordy Walker had accosted.

"Well," said Phillis's lover, "that ugly face isn't like to

be forgot! Next time he comes my way he'd best keep a civilier tongue in his head!"

Phillis was at the inn door when Geordy drove up. Her mother having gone to market, she could speak to him without fear of interruption; and while he went in, Loll, who was still loitering about, was summoned to mind the cart and horse. The conference lasted nearly half an hour. It might, perhaps, have been more quickly ended, but when lovers meet at long intervals—indeed, whenever they meet—they have always some matters to speak of which do not concern other people. Rachel's business, however, was not overlooked, for after a time she came down, and was consigned to Geordy's conveyance, into which, when he had had another word inside with Phillis, or, possibly, something besides a word, he also stepped. Then there was much shaking of hands between Rachel and Phillis, and many injunctions were given by the latter to her lover about driving carefully, the girl laughingly reminding Geordy of what had just happened on the bridge, and he as laughingly replying that the accident was all her fault.

"Mind how thou crosses t' Lune beck," said Phillis; "maybe thou mayst meet wi' t' miller's daughter, and so get an overturn."

"Phœbe Snaith is a proper lass," retorted Geordy; "she keeps away fro' t' windows. Besides," he added, "she went to Romaldskirk last Monday to be married."

Loll's large red ears were made for listening. He heard the names of the places mentioned, and knew well where they were; nevertheless, it was necessary for him to be acquainted with the exact spot to which Rachel was being conveyed, and when the cart recrossed the bridge he followed in the same direction, the irregularities of the ground enabling him to keep it in view by an occasional sharp run. Thus, when Geordy, instead of taking the Bowes road, turned off to the westward at Startforth, he tracked him across the Deepdale river, along the bleak moor which stretches away to Cotherston, past the dark woods of Hunderthwaite, by the ruined tower that once guarded the entrance to Lune Dale, and then, after climbing the steep ascent beyond Mickleton, beheld him winding down the gorge of Holwick, where the road becomes almost impass-

able. It was a journey of four long hours, but he pursued his way untired, stimulated by the promised reward from Matthew Yates ; and, at last, he saw Geordy Walker draw the rein in front of a substantial, stone-built cottage ; he saw him get out of the cart and go into the house ; he saw him presently return with an old woman, who leant on a stick as she walked ; and, finally, he saw Rachel descend from the vehicle and enter the cottage, followed by Geordy, who carried her trunk. This, then, was the place where, for the present at all events, she intended to remain. But he lingered a little longer, for he wished to learn if Rachel's companion lived there too. In less than a quarter of an hour his curiosity was satisfied : Geordy Walker came forth alone, resumed his seat, and turning his horse's head, drove past the clump of trees behind which Loll had hidden to watch his proceedings.

While Matthew Yates's spy is making the best of his way back, let us see what Matthew Yates has himself been doing.

It is needless to say that he was the surly occupant of the chaise encountered by Geordy Walker on Barnard Castle Bridge. He, too, had seen Phillis at the window as he left the inn, and his natural surliness was heightened by the fact that she had turned away her head when he looked up, though it was plain enough she knew he was passing. If Matthew Yates had known a little more—if somebody had whispered that the handsome young man of whom he had fallen foul was Phillis's lover—curses alone would not have contented him ; but in the absence of this knowledge his thoughts reverted to the evil on which he was originally bent. He must see Mrs. Scrope as soon as he could, and take her directions with respect to Rachel, little doubting of their tenor.

Frequent visits of late to Scargill Hall had made Matthew Yates perfectly familiar to the locality, and, after leaving the chaise at Bowes, it was his custom now to approach the house by a private entrance, the key of which had been given him for that purpose by Mrs. Scrope. The park in which Scargill Hall stood was almost entirely surrounded by a broad fringe of beech and fir, overhanging a grey, moss-covered paling, and the gate by which Matthew Yates entered



opened into one of the most secluded parts of the domain, the path to the Hall winding beneath the belt of trees, whose frequent stems and feathering foliage effectually concealed whoever passed that way. Secure from observation, Mrs. Scrope's emissary hastily strode on, and had arrived within a short distance of the only clear space that intervened between the outer circle and the gardens near the house, when he perceived some one sitting close to the path which he was obliged to follow, unless he struck out at once into the open part. It was a female figure, and from her attitude and the position of her head she seemed to be reading. Matthew Yates paused: it was desirable, for many reasons, that his visits to the owner of Scargill Hall should be a secret from all but one or two trusted servants. To cross the sward would oblige him to pass in front of the seated figure; to go straight on would bring him within a few yards of where she sat; he could not turn back, his business was too important. After a moment's hesitation, he resolved to continue as if no interruption had arisen, trusting that he was sufficiently light of foot to escape without notice. In all probability this would have been the case if it had depended only on the susceptibility of a human ear, but stealthily as Matthew Yates advanced, a finer organ detected him: a little dog of the King Charles breed suddenly jumped from his mistress's lap, and confronting him on the path, began to bark fiercely. Matthew Yates instinctively raised a heavy stick, but before he had time to strike, a voice called out:—

"Stop, sir; what are you doing? How dare you threaten my dog!"

The speaker, who had risen from the ground, was a beautiful girl, of slight, graceful figure, and with a very animated countenance, to which the occasion lent a proud, fearless expression. She fixed her deep-set, dark-blue eyes on the intruder, who cast down his own as they met her glance, while his uplifted arm sank by his side.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he muttered; "I only meant to frighten him."

"And what right, sir, had you to do that? Who are you? What do you want here?"

"I have some business at the Hall," replied Yates.

"Indeed!" cried his questioner. "Why did you come this way? If you have business, you should have entered on the other side: this part of the park is private."

"I'm sorry, miss, I made you afraid——"

"Afraid!" she interrupted, scornfully. "You disturbed me, that was all. Come here, Chorister, and let the man pass. Go on, sir, and be careful how you venture here again."

The dog came to her side, and without bestowing another look on Matthew Yates, she sat down and resumed her book.

"Go on!" repeated Yates, when he was out of hearing. "If you knew what I have in this pocket-book, you'd say, 'Come back,' instead; ay, and you'd speak in a gentler tone, and not crush one under your feet as if one was dirt. She has all the pride of her family, that's plain! She calls her whelp of a dog 'Chorister!' I fancy I know the reason. No, Miss Tunstall, *you* shan't have the letter, anyhow. I'll make money of it another way."

A quarter of an hour afterwards Matthew Yates was in the presence of Mrs. Scrope.

She had been ill, and the traces of her malady were distinctly visible in her thin hands, her hollow eyes, and sunken cheeks; but she sat as erect as ever, and her haughty air had not in the least abated.

"Well," she said, "have you any news from France?"

"No, my lady," replied Yates, habitually associating his patroness with the highest rank. "I didn't expect to, yet. I *have* some news, though."

"Concerning whom?"

"Somebody you'd little suppose, my lady. Rachel Loring that was: Perrotin's wife that is."

"Ah! what of her?"

"She's down here, my lady."

"Here! she must be either a fool or mad! What do you mean?"

Yates briefly related the discovery he had made, and the course he had adopted respecting Rachel.

Mrs. Scrope mused for a short time; then she said: "The boy, you tell me, is in Paris, with some friends of those Rouen people; and she took him there, did she not?"

Yates said such was the case.

"Can you guess why she has come to England? Here, above all other places!"

"To see you, perhaps, my lady."

"I doubt it. She would hardly venture upon such a step. Recollect what she was threatened with."

"But if she thinks the boy is safe, she may not have minded that. Most likely she wants you to forgive all that's happened."

"She knows me better," said Mrs. Scrope, with a gloomy smile. "Rachel Loring must be changed indeed to stand before me without trembling. No! There is some other motive. You must find it out."

"There is only one way of doing so that I know of," said Yates.

"What is that?"

"Putting on the screw, my lady. You see, if she's come over with a secret purpose, she'll keep her secret until she's forced to give it up. That's where it is."

"What do you advise, then?"

"Lay hands on her, and prevent her from seeing anybody about the place; once under lock and key, her tongue can do no harm."

"But there must be a warrant for the seizure. It will be difficult to get that."

"There's no need of no warrant, my lady. In a lonesome part of the world like this, one easily gets a chance. Anyhow, I've an answer ready. It's no new game with me."

"Can you do it by yourself?"

"Well, my lady, if I can't, I've got some one, I think, who'll help me."

"Who knows nothing whatever about my affairs!"

"Nothing, my lady."

"And where do you propose to take her?"

"Rose Cottage is about the best place I know of."

"You mean your own house?"

"Yes, my lady. Close to Hendon. Stands back from the road; quite retired; nothing nearer than half a mile; very quiet—very."

"Your wife is there now?"

"She never goes away. There's always some one to look after."

Again Mrs. Scrope reflected. The great object of her life was to suppress all knowledge of her grandson's parentage. Except Rachel and her husband, and her own creature, Yates, nobody lived, she thought, who could disclose the truth. The opportunity of silencing Rachel was too tempting to be neglected.

"Let what you have to do, then," she said, addressing Yates again, "be done as quickly, and with as little violence as possible."

"Violence, my lady! Oh no—there won't be no violence! We always persuades them—a look does it."

"You will want money. Take this."

She gave him a bank-note of some value.

Yates's eyes glistened as he put it by.

"It would be throwing away that letter," he said to himself, "if I gave it her to-day. It will fetch its price some other time."

"Let me hear from you," said Mrs. Scrope, "directly this business is concluded. Leave me now."

Yates bowed, and silently withdrew. He was in the act of closing the door, when, at a quick pace, with Chorister careering by her side, Mary Tunstall entered the hall. Observing whence he issued, her glance denoted no less surprise than dislike; but she passed him without a word, and entered Mrs. Scrope's study.

"I came, grandmamma," she said, "to tell you of a very disagreeable-looking man whom I saw just now in the dell where I generally go to read—but my errand, I find, is unnecessary."

"Why so, Mary?" asked Mrs. Scrope.

"Because I met him coming out of this room."

"Oh, you met him!"

"Yes, grandmamma. Here at the door. Who is he?"

"Who is he, Mary? Some one whom I employ."

"A gamekeeper, grandmamma?"

"Yes, child, yes; he is one of the keepers."

"I hope I shall never meet him again. I feel as if I almost hated that man—he has such a very bad countenance. I could imagine him capable of doing anything wicked."

"You should never judge of people by their looks, Mary," said Mrs. Scrope, coldly. "The person you choose to dislike so much is a very trusty servant."

"Well, grandmamma, it may, perhaps, be very wrong in me to say so, but I should be very sorry to trust him. Chorister, too, is of my opinion. I never saw him so angry before. Poor little fellow, he keeps growling still."

Chorister's instincts were true again. Matthew Yates, standing near the open window of Mrs. Scrope's study, was listening to the conversation within. At Mary Tunstall's last words he noiselessly crept away, and was soon on the road to Barnard Castle.

"You *almost* hate me, miss," he muttered—"the time may come for you to hate me *quite*. It shan't be my fault if you don't."

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A NEW FRIEND AND AN OLD FOE.

RACHEL's thoughts were sad enough as she sat alone in her bedroom on the night of her arrival at the lonely cottage in Holwick Gill. Though in a place of safety, and her retreat unknown, as she imagined, to Matthew Yates (of whose discovery she was ignorant), proximity to one so dangerous was, in itself, a sufficient cause for anxiety. While at a distance from Mrs. Scrope, she had underrated the difficulty of her attempt, but now she was on the spot, her dread of her former mistress revived. In what manner, without Mrs. Scrope's knowledge, should she endeavour to carry out her design of obtaining a private interview with Lady Tunstall? It must be at her own personal risk, for there was nobody about her by whom she could send a message. Geordy Walker's aunt, Tibbie Newsham, was nearly stone-deaf, and already the few words that had passed between them were only a series of useless cross-questions. The servant, a stout wench from the neighbouring fells of Westmoreland, spoke a dialect that was quite incomprehensible; neither did she appear to understand one word in

seven that was addressed to her. Days might pass before Rachel had an opportunity of speaking to Geordy Walker himself, for he had confessed to her that it was the busy time of harvest with him, and that nothing but a summons from Phillis could have taken him from his farm at such a moment. He had seen Rachel made comfortable, as he supposed, at Holwick Gill, and that satisfied him. Post-office there was none in Lune Forest, neither was there any very great occasion for the convenience, the scattered inhabitants of the district being not much given to letter-writing: a long walk and a long talk were the means usually resorted to as a substitute for postal communication. Yet Rachel must write to Lady Tunstall, and contrive to send her letter. The actual fact of writing was, however, her first difficulty. Under the circumstances just described, pens, ink, and paper were unattainable in the cottage of Tibbie Newsham: to procure them, the nearest place was Romaldskirk, the only village of any size which Rachel had seen on her way to Holwick, and she decided on going there on the morrow: it was too remote from Barnard Castle or Scargill Hall to expose her to the chance of meeting again with Matthew Yates. Having settled thus much in her own mind, Rachel retired to rest, nor was it long before she found the sleep she wanted, while listening to the waters of the Tees as they rushed over the fall of High Force, distant several miles, yet distinctly audible amid the silence of night.

There were no cross-roads to divert her from her course, and a walk of two hours, after an early breakfast next morning, brought her to Romaldskirk. The church stood at the end of the village nearest to Holwick, and Rachel observed, as she approached, that the principal door was open. Many years had gone by since she had knelt in a place of worship in her own land; the yearning for prayer was too strong to be resisted, and she softly went in. Not, however, to join in the service, for there was none, the door having only been unlocked to admit one or two workmen who were engaged in some casual repairs. But this mattered not to Rachel. Her habit in Rouen, while still preserving her Protestantism, had always been to avail

herself of the opportunity of entering God's House, which is so happily afforded in Roman Catholic countries, and in conformity with that practice she now acted.

The church of Saint Romald is of so old a date that none are agreed as to the identity of him to whom it is dedicated. Except the foundations, however, no part of the original edifice still exists, but ecclesiastical art has gained by the appearance of the present building, which was erected in the thirteenth century. The architects of that time raised many a parish church in the fashion of a small cathedral, and Saint Romald's was one of these, with its double aisles, its transepts, its choir, and its Lady-chapel.

Unnoticed by the workmen, Rachel drew near the altar, and kneeling down, prayed long and fervently—that God would be merciful, and hear the voice of her complaint; that the hardness of Mrs. Scrope's heart might be turned; that success might attend the effort she was making to recover the orphan's inheritance; that a lone mother might rejoice; and that she herself, these things witnessed, might humbly hope to be accepted!

With a bosom disburdened of much care, Rachel rose from the altar-steps, and now, with her mind comparatively at ease, had leisure to examine and admire the building. It lacked the grandeur and splendour of the magnificent edifices which had been constantly before her eyes at Rouen, but some of its features appealed more directly to her feelings. The records of the dead told of the people of her own country; many of the names she read were historical, the inscriptions interested her by their quaint and earnest piety, and the monuments told of great personages whose greatness now was buried in the dust. One tomb attracted her more than the all rest. Raised high above the pavement was the sculptured effigy of a knight in chain-armour, his mailed hand on the hilt of his half-drawn sword, his crossed feet resting on a headless lion, and his stern features un-mutilated, or only worn by time. Rachel was no herald, and made little account of the device on the warrior's shield, or the golden bend on the azure field might have declared the family to which he belonged; neither was she skilled

in mediæval writing, which else had informed her that the inscription she vainly tried to make out exhorted her to pray for the soul of

**Sir Hugh le Scrope,**

*Et trespassa le jour Saint Jehan le Baptiste l'an de l' Incarnacion*

**MCCCLV.**

While Rachel was examining the tomb she heard a foot-step near, and looking round, perceived some one standing beside her. It was an old man, simply dressed in black, and his long silver hair and general appearance denoted him to be upwards of sixty years of age. With a benevolent smile, he accosted Rachel.

"That was a famous person in his day," he said, pointing to the recumbent Crusader.

"Indeed, sir!" replied Rachel. "Who was he?"

"So the inscription has puzzled you? I dare say, though they all know whose tomb this is, there's not a person in the parish who can read it but myself. See, it runs round the effigy, beginning here. It is written in Norman-French."

"If I know any French at all, sir, it ought to be that, for I have been living a good while at Rouen, in Normandy."

The old man smiled again. "I am afraid," he said, "that the gallant knight's language would scarcely be understood by the modern Normans themselves. Listen to me while I translate the epitaph."

He then read the inscription.

"What name, sir, did you say?" asked Rachel.

"Le Scrope," replied the old man,— "an ancestor of the great Scrope family here in Yorkshire. There was a great contest once—but it was after his day—for the right to the coat of arms that is sculptured there. No one bears it now. The house of Scrope, as the French heralds say, 'est tombée en quenouille'—the lance is broken, the distaff only remains. Ah! you understand nothing of this jargon. I mean that there is no heir-male left."

A sudden tremor came over Rachel at these words. The old man perceived it.

"You appear unwell," he said—"sit down and rest yourself; you have been standing too long."



"No, I thank you, sir," returned Rachel. "It was only a kind of faintness for the moment. It is gone now. But about the Scrope family, sir; there are some of the name still, I believe?"

"Oh yes; there is the widow of the late Mr. Scrope; she lives hard by, at Scargill Hall. An aged woman now—and grey, I am told—but I remember her when she was young and fair. Well I may remember her, for"—he paused for a moment—"for I placed her hand in that of Richard Scrope before that very altar."

"You are the clergyman, then, sir!"

"Mr. Scrope was my patron. He gave me this living forty years ago. It was always agreed between us that I should marry him whenever the time came. I kept my promise—yes, I kept it truly. Poor Scrope! He died young, but she never married again. No! she never changed her name. Who can say if she would have been happier had she done so?"

The old clergyman sighed and bent his eyes on the ground, while Rachel remained silent, fearing to disturb his reverie. At last he spoke again, following the current of thought which had newly been awakened.

"If she had had a son, her ambition would, at least, have been gratified. 'Ill-weaved ambition!' Yet her daughters were the loveliest creatures I ever saw! A mother might have reason to be proud of them—prouder than of many sons. Edith and Agatha. Poor Edith! She was her father's image. But what is the matter with you, my good friend? You are crying!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," sobbed Rachel, "but a name you mentioned, sir, reminded me of—of——"

"Ah, I see! Poor thing! You have lost a child called——"

"No, sir, no! I must not deceive you. I know the family well. I once lived in it. I was Miss Edith's own maid!"

"Ah, indeed! No wonder you felt interested in hearing me talk about them. When was that?"

"Oh, before her marriage, sir, with her cousin, Lord Deepdale."

"What is your name?"

"My Christian name, sir, is Rachel; my maiden name was Loring. I am called Perrotin now, sir."

"So! You married a Frenchman, and went to live abroad. And you have come to this part of the country to see Mrs. Scrope again?"

Rachel answered indirectly,—“I wanted, after so long a time, to learn something of Miss Edith. I was told, sir, that—that she had died. Is it true, sir, or not?”

“She has long been an invalid,” replied the clergyman, “but I hear—indeed, I know—though Mrs. Scrope and I have not met for many, many years—that she is still living.”

“Oh, thank God! thank God!” cried Rachel, falling on her knees, and raising her clasped hands to heaven, “this is blessed news indeed! Where is she sir—oh, can you tell me!”

“Somewhere in Italy, that I am sure of, but I do not know the place. However, you will learn that at once from Mrs. Scrope, or from Lady Tunstall, who not long since was staying with her sister; she is now at Scargill Hall.”

“I am aware of it, sir. My object in coming down here was to see Lady Tunstall if I could.”

“That is easy enough, surely. I have long ceased to be a visitor at the Hall, but they tell me she is always there.”

“Yes, sir, but—the real truth is, sir, there are reasons why I cannot—why I dare not, go to Scargill.”

“That appears singular. Did you do anything formerly that you are ashamed to own?”

“No, sir,” exclaimed Rachel earnestly—“others may have cause to be ashamed, but I have none!”

“I cannot quite understand you. Yet you speak and look like an honest person. I would assist you if it were in my power, but unless I knew more of your history I fear I can be of little service. Some secret weighs upon your mind?”

“You are right, sir. A heavy secret. Oh, if I might ask you to befriend me, a fatherless child would for ever bless your name!”

The clergyman seemed perplexed. While he hesitated to reply, another person entered the church, who looked up and down eagerly, and then hastily approached him.

"What is the matter, Crossthwaite?" asked the clergyman.

"Oh, Mr. Dalton," said the new-comer, who proved to be the parish-clerk, "I'm glad to have found you. There's a lad come riding in fro' Brignall wi' t' news that Squire Coates is on his deathbed, and sorely wants to see you."

"Poor man! Tell the messenger I will set out immediately. I must go," added Mr. Dalton, turning to Rachel, "but if you are willing to confide in me, come to the rectory this evening at seven o'clock; I shall be back early I trust. Are you lodging in the village?"

Rachel explained where she was staying. This caused an alteration in the time agreed on. It would be too far and too late for her to return to Romaldskirk that evening, so the meeting was fixed for the following morning. Mr. Dalton, pressing her hand, told her to be of good cheer, and then, after reminding her of the engagement, hastily left the church.

At "The Shop" in Romaldskirk, which supplied everything in the shape of dry goods—from wearing apparel to eatables—Rachel procured materials for writing, and when she got back to Holwick occupied herself in preparing a letter to Lady Tunstall, which she proposed to send after submitting it for the approval of Mr. Dalton. Rachel had not much clerical skill, and after the labour of three or four hours, during which numerous sheets of paper were destroyed, and many pens thrown aside for faults not altogether their own, the result was as follows:

"HON<sup>d</sup> MADAM,—A person who have not seen y<sup>r</sup> Ladyship for several years, but which was once well known to you, though i dare not to mention my name, humbly take the liberty of requesting permission to wait upon y<sup>r</sup> Ladyship *in private*, having a great favour to ask, and other circumstances affecting y<sup>r</sup> Ladyship's family to speak of which i cannot put them in writing. If granted the obligation would be greatly increaced by naming an hour to meet y<sup>r</sup> Ladyship at the house of the Rev<sup>nd</sup> Mr. Dalton, Rectory, Romaldskirk, who have kindly permitted me to do so. Y<sup>r</sup> Ladyship's well-wisher, and humble servant.

"P.S.—*Please my lady not to name my request to anybody whatever.* My duty to y<sup>r</sup> Ladyship and Miss T."

"The gentleman's manner was so kind," said Rachel to herself, when she read over this effusion, "that I think when he comes to hear all, he will not object to what I have written."

Having folded, sealed, and fairly superscribed her letter, Rachel placed it on the table, that she might not forget it when she kept her appointment at Romaldskirk.

It was a lovely evening, and to relieve the loneliness of her situation, she thought it would be pleasant to pass an hour or two out of doors, so, putting on her bonnet and shawl, she took the path which led to the high road above the Tees, and there, within sight of one of the falls which give so romantic a character to that part of the river, she sat down on the heath-covered ground, and leaning against a rock, abandoned herself to meditation. The intelligence that Lady Deepdale still lived had greatly cheered her, and the castle-building which she reared on this foundation speedily witnessed the accomplishment of all her desires.

While her dream was at the brightest, an uncouth voice sounded in her ears. It was a man dressed like a postilion who spoke.

"Missus," he said, "be thy naam Rachel?"

She answered in the affirmative.

"Then there be a gentleman yonder 'at wants to speak to thee."

Rachel looked in the direction in which he pointed, and saw a carriage and pair at the foot of the hill. Her thoughts instantly reverted to Mr. Dalton. He had, no doubt, returned sooner than he expected, and driven out to see her. The steepness of the ascent and the rugged nature of the road were reasons quite sufficient for stopping where he did, having once perceived her. Perhaps, since the morning, he had learned Lady Deepdale's precise address! She did not hesitate a moment, but rapidly walked towards the carriage, followed by the postilion.

Mr. Dalton, if he it were, was seated in the carriage, wrapped in a loose great-coat; he held a handkerchief up to his face, which, coupled with the dusk of the evening, completely concealed his features.

"May I beg of you to step in?" he said—and Rachel, suspecting nothing, immediately took her place beside him.

Scarcely had she done so before the door was shut, and the postboy, jumping into his saddle, turned the horses' heads round, and set off at a swingeing trot along the road to Romaldskirk. To Rachel's still greater surprise, her companion sank back in the carriage without removing his handkerchief. "He is suffering great pain of mind," she thought—"perhaps his friend is dead!" This idea kept her silent for a few minutes. At last, as he did not speak, she ventured to address him. "I fear, sir, you are ill," she said. Still she obtained no reply. The carriage drove on. Rachel recognized the church of St. Romald as they went past—then the village, and the house which she had been told was the rectory—but the post-boy never stopped. By the waning light Rachel perceived that they were skirting a gloomy moor which she recollected having passed the day before. A vague fear now seized her.

"Where are you taking me?" she cried. "You are not Mr. Dalton!"

"No, my dear," was the reply, "not Mr. Dalton exactly, but somebody as you may happen to know quite as well. What do you think of Mr. Yates?"

Rachel gave a loud scream, but in an instant both her wrists were grasped as if in a vice, and a large hand covered her mouth.

"If you make a noise," he said, "it will be the worse for you!"

This counsel was unheeded. With all her strength she strove to get free, and partly succeeded.

"Stop, postboy, stop!" she cried—"help! murder! help!"

"It's of no use, I tell you," whispered Yates hoarsely; "he knows you're mad as well as I do. Get on, Loll!"

"Oh, God!" she exclaimed, "am I, too, to be this man's victim!"

The gag, in Yates's hand, was not wanted. She had fallen into a deep swoon, and with undiminished speed the driver urged his horses on.

Bewildered, remembering nothing but a rapid flight, amidst flashing lamps and the scream of the railway whistle, Rachel's consciousness was only restored when a gaunt, repulsive woman stood by her bedside one morning, and told her she was an inmate of Rose Cottage.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## A CONSULTATION.

AT the hour named for Rachel's promised visit to the rectory, Mr. Dalton was in his library. His thoughts were too much occupied in speculating on the nature of her intended communication to admit of his betaking himself to his usual pursuits, and nothing was added that morning to the unfinished page of county history which lay on the desk before him—not a book was opened to assist his researches; but he sat in his arm-chair, gazing on vacancy, yet with a peopled mind.

Though the best part of his life and the hope which first gilded it were irrecoverably gone—though the experience of long years had taught him that there was no remembered association on the part of her whom he had once been encouraged to love—nothing could happen in any way affecting the family of Mrs. Scrope in which he did not feel the deepest interest.

Born to fair if not high prospects, Henry Dalton, then an Oxford student, had always been a welcome guest at the house of Mr. Lovel, Mrs. Scrope's father, and Agnes Lovel, the eldest of his two daughters, not only gave him friendship, but trusted him—she said—with something more. It was a trust, however, which she soon revoked, for Mr. Lovel's only son died, and Agnes and her sister became co-heiresses to the largest estates in Lincolnshire. Ambition was the ruling passion of Agnes Lovel, and even before the wealthy and high-born Mr. Scrope became a suitor for her hand, she had cancelled the vows which bound her to Henry Dalton—at the moment, moreover, when family misfortunes made him almost a beggar.

Sorrowing to think he had given his heart to one who made the world her idol—sorrowing but loving still—Dalton went to the Continent, returning at the end of three years to enter holy orders. Soon after he had taken them, chance threw him in the way of Philip Scrope, an early college

friend; their intimacy was renewed, and Dalton was reminded of a pledge he had formerly given to perform the marriage ceremony for Scrope whenever the latter should marry. Scrope claimed the promise now, but out of mere caprice—perhaps to add piquancy to the occasion—refused to tell the name of his bride, and it was only on entering the vestry-room of Saint Romald's that Dalton found he was summoned to join the hands of Philip Scrope and Agnes Lovel. God gave him strength to fulfil the self-imposed duty, and sustained him afterwards to become the constant witness of his friend's happiness, and bear, after Scrope's death, the pang of loving still without requital.

During the first years of Mrs. Scrope's widowhood, Henry Dalton frequently saw her, but after she took her daughters abroad, all intercourse ceased until she came back again to live at Scargill Hall, and then it was only formally renewed. At the period of Edith's ill-starred marriage his own affairs had taken him to Ireland, and he knew no more than those who were strangers to Mrs. Scrope that she had visited that part of the country in his absence. That a gloom, from some unknown cause, had fallen on her mind, Dalton was well aware, and once, indeed, he made approaches with offers of more than common service; but he was coldly repelled, and obliged to shut up in his own bosom the unselfish wishes he had formed for her welfare.

The conversation which Mr. Dalton had had with Rachel, carried him back to the events of which we have given an outline, and these events led him onward again to the point from which he started—the nature of the story he was waiting to hear. He looked at his watch; it was three-quarters of an hour beyond the time appointed. Though he had given particular instructions that Rachel should be shown in when she came, he rang the bell to ask his housekeeper if she had been refused admittance. Certainly not, was the housekeeper's reply; no person whatever had called. It was singular. The woman's anxiety was, evidently, not feigned; she had begged for his advice too eagerly to allow him to suppose she was not in earnest. He had another reason for trusting her: unseen himself, he had beheld her in prayer at the altar's foot, and truth, without a look or gesture of hypocrisy, characterized her every word

and movement. She was no impostor then. Some accidental circumstance made her late. He would wait a little longer.

The full hour was at last completed, and progress made in another, but still she came not. Mr. Dalton's impatience changed to a feeling of apprehension. It was possible that illness was the cause of her non-appearance. This idea gaining possession of him, he resolved to go in quest of her, and ordered his horse to the door, leaving word, as he mounted, that if his expected visitor arrived while he was gone—should he miss her on the road—she was to be detained till he came back. He then set out at a brisk pace for Holwick.

When he got to Tibbie Newsham's cottage, it was with some difficulty that he made the deaf old woman understand whom he wanted. At last, however, she became enlightened, but her answer filled him with astonishment.

"T' lass be run away," screamed Tibbie; "neither me nor Susy Snaith ha' seen nowt on her sin' yester eve."

Susy Snaith, who came in at the moment, with a milk-pail under her arm, confirmed this statement in choicest Westmoreland phrase.

Mr. Dalton proceeded to ask further questions, but could obtain no more satisfactory reply. The stranger woman was gone, that was all they knew; but, after a time, Tibbie Newsham admitted that she had left all her things behind—"all but those she had on her back when she went out t' evening before, while Susy Snaith was teddin' up t' kye." The gentleman might see the room she had slept in the night but one before; it was just as she left it; nothing had been touched.

Mr. Dalton accepted this offer, and Susy Snaith, as his guide, marshalled him up-stairs to Rachel's bedroom. There stood her trunk, her night-clothes were on the bed, a gown was hanging up, a book and one or two other articles were on the drawers, and on a table near the window a sealed letter was lying. The letter Mr. Dalton hastily caught up, thinking it might give some clue to Rachel's whereabouts, but on turning it over he found it was addressed to Lady Tunstall.

It at once became clear to Mr. Dalton that Rachel's



absence was unpremeditated. She meant, without doubt, to have taken that letter with her to Romaldskirk; to write it was carrying out, in part, the desires she had expressed to Mr. Dalton. Susy Snaith seemed to be of a different opinion. Coming to an inevitable feminine conclusion, she suggested suicide.

"Maybe t' lass has loped into t' beck!"

This catastrophe, or something like it, was, in the first instance, Mr. Dalton's own fear, but the letter, for the reasons already assigned, had dispelled it. While he was meditating on the course that had best be taken, he heard a man's voice below. It was Geordy Walker, who, in the interval of the dinner-hour, had come over to see if he could be of any use to Rachel. Tibbie Newsham was a "Methody," and sought spiritual comfort at a meeting-house; she was, consequently, unacquainted with the person of the clergyman of the parish; but her nephew was orthodox, and—now and then—formed one of the scanty congregation at Saint Romald's. He, therefore, at once recognized Mr. Dalton, and learning the cause of his appearance at Holwick, explained as much as he knew of the circumstances under which Rachel had sought an asylum there. She had reason, he told Mr. Dalton, to apprehend violence from a person, not a native of those parts, who had lately been staying at the Brig-gate Inn at Barnard Castle. That person's name was Yates, but he went by the *alias* of Wood, which plainly showed that, whatever his business in Yorkshire, he wished to keep it secret. There was, however, no apparent connexion between this man and Rachel's disappearance. Nobody had been seen lurking near the cottage, and she had left it of her own free will.

Assisted by Geordy Walker, Mr. Dalton made a strict examination of the Gill, but with no satisfactory result: the paths were untrampled, the fences unbroken, no relic of dress was found in the woods or by the stream—nothing existed in that immediate neighbourhood to indicate the commission of any act of violence, and Mr. Dalton felt satisfied that a wider search must be instituted. Geordy Walker willingly abandoned his own affairs and returned to Romaldskirk with the clergyman, who, being a magistrate, speedily assembled a sufficient number of constables, and

sent them out in all directions—one of them accompanying Geordy to Barnard Castle. For his own part, Mr. Dalton resolved to lose no time in seeing Lady Tunstall. It was possible that the letter which he had brought away with him from the cottage contained something which might throw a light, if not on the cause of Rachel's evasion, at least on her past history, and this association might furnish a clue to her discovery. As soon, therefore, as he had dispersed his messengers, Mr. Dalton turned his horse's head towards Scargill Hall.

Fortunately, Lady Tunstall was at home and alone, Mrs. Scrope and Mary having gone for a long drive. He sent up his name, and was admitted.

Lady Tunstall's beauty bore a strong resemblance to that of her mother before care had eaten her heart away, and it was not without emotion that Mr. Dalton stood in her presence. Her manner, though proud, was courteous.

"I have every apology," he said, "to make for this intrusion, but the purport of my visit will, I trust, obtain your ladyship's pardon."

Lady Tunstall bowed, and motioned him to proceed.

"There was once," he continued, "if I mistake not, a person in the service of your family named Rachel Loring?"

"Certainly," replied Lady Tunstall; "I remember her very well. She was my sister's maid, and, after her marriage, my mother's. She was with my mother on the Continent, but, on her return to England, left her, as I understood, very abruptly."

"And your ladyship knows nothing more respecting her?"

"Nothing!"

Mr. Dalton then related the particulars of what had taken place the day before in Saint Romald's church. Lady Tunstall listened with attention, but made no comment, though her countenance wore a serious air. But she gave way to some expressions of surprise when she heard that Rachel had suddenly disappeared, leaving a letter addressed to herself. She read it silently to the end, and then gave it to Mr. Dalton, desiring him to read it too. When he had done so, she said:—

"This letter, as you see, explains nothing; but I do not

on that account reject it as worthless, though, in all probability, I should have done so if you had not told me who was the writer. Be so good as to repeat the words she used at the close of your conversation yesterday."

Mr. Dalton did as he was requested.

"You were my father's old friend," resumed Lady Tunstall, "and I am disposed to speak more freely to you than I should to any one else. To you, then, I do not mind saying that I think it possible Rachel Loring's communication might have been worth attending to. What it directly points at I cannot tell, and in her absence conjecture would be useless. The strange part of the affair is, that she should wish to see me and not my mother, as is apparent from her reluctance to come here, her desire to speak to me privately, her injunction to secrecy, and her writing anonymously. Why she should have gone away, after all these precautions, after coming so far, also, for the express purpose of seeing me, I cannot at all imagine."

"It is only to be accounted for," returned Mr. Dalton, "on the supposition that her departure was not voluntary. She was hiding herself at the time from a man whom she thought her enemy."

"But how could he have spirited her away? Such things are not of common occurrence in England. Some sudden access of fear may have impelled her to a second flight."

"That is scarcely consistent with the wish expressed in her letter to your ladyship."

"You are right, Mr. Dalton. She *must* have intended to see me when she wrote. Who is the man you alluded to?"

"I only know his name. Did your ladyship ever hear it? Yates."

"Yates! Yates! No! I cannot charge my memory with any such name. He is probably some one whom she fell in with after she left our family. Her marriage, I make no doubt, was an unhappy one. She spoke of a fatherless child! Was she in mourning?"

Let me see. Her dress was very neat, but it had no appearance of mourning. She wore a black gown, but her shawl, I recollect, was red."

"It is no recent loss, then. But, as I said before, conjecture at present is from the purpose. The great question is the safety of this poor woman. She was a favourite with us both; and Edith, I know, was greatly attached to her."

"And Mrs. Scrope?"

"My mother is not very demonstrative. She may have liked her or not, but from what she said, in reply to an inquiry I once made, I think she was much displeased when Rachel went away. Something, very likely, occurred at that time which may account for Rachel's disinclination to come here."

"It would be as well then, perhaps, not to name the subject to Mrs. Scrope; at all events, not until we have more information."

"I quite agree with you. In the meanwhile, let no expense be spared to find out what has become of Rachel Loring—or Perrotin, did you say? Any reward you think proper to offer I will gladly give. You will send to me the moment you have any news?"

This Mr. Dalton promised. Lady Tunstall shook hands with great cordiality, and he took his leave.

"A heavy secret!" soliloquized Lady Tunstall, as she watched his departure. "To whom can it refer? To my mother, or Edith? It is clear there is a passage in the family history with which I am unacquainted."

Mr. Dalton's reflections tended towards the same end. He rode quickly back to Romaldskirk, but the day went by and no tidings of Rachel were received. He heard, however, from Geordy Walker, on his return from the Brig-gate Inn, that the stranger, calling himself Wood, had left on the previous morning, when he said he was going to London; indeed, Phillis herself, to her great delight, had seen him depart by the Darlington coach. The fact of Rachel's abduction remained, therefore, as great a mystery to him as ever.

Something remained, however, for Mr. Dalton still to do.

As a magistrate he thought it advisable to see himself that whatever property Rachel had left behind should be kept in a place of safety, in the event of her returning to claim it. He therefore went over again to Holwick, accompanied by Crosssthaite, his clerk. They made an

inventory of all that was lying about, and Rachel's keys being also found, locked everything up in her box, and removed it to the rectory.

In doing so one object attracted the attention of Mr. Dalton. It was a small, red-morocco case. Curiosity prompted him to open it, and he found it was a daguerrotype—the portrait of a boy. The art was then in its infancy, and only those who were intimately acquainted with the original would have been likely to trace the resemblance. But, notwithstanding the false expression, the disproportionate features, and the dusky hue of the complexion, which quite obliterated the bloom of youth, Mr. Dalton could not help thinking that the countenance was one with which he was familiar. It reminded him of more than one person, but whom it recalled in particular he could not bring to mind. Was this, he asked himself, the fatherless child in whom Rachel took so deep an interest?

With a sigh he closed the case, and deposited it with the rest.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV

### LE MARCHAND D'HABITS.

WHEN that estimable Norman gentleman, Monsieur Auguste Mercier, informed Mr. Yates that he was well acquainted with Paris, he spoke no more than the truth. There are certain seasons when the country is an agreeable place of residence; certain events also occur when it may be desirable to change the air of the city for the purer breezes of the plain; and when the season and the reason combine, the country has a decided advantage over the town. But this is only for a time. After all, the man of business or of pleasure always returns to the place which brings him the greatest profit or gives him the most amusement, and, acting on this principle, Monsieur Auguste Mercier was found in Paris more frequently than elsewhere—by his friends, you will understand, for there were those in the opposite category by whom he would much rather not be

found. On account of the latter class, indeed, he was fain very often to shroud his somewhat classical appellation beneath the first that suggested itself—Rigaud, Caron, Glatou, no matter which—while his most intimate associates called him “Le Poulain,” a name which, apart from its allusion to horse-dealing, signified in their jargon one who was more than commonly skilful and daring in the pursuits to which they were all addicted. Nicknames, in fact, are a necessity amongst the members of the predatorial profession, in which society Le Poulain occupied a distinguished position.

The same motive which led to the adoption of a *nom de guerre*, also influenced its proprietor in the choice of an abode; and accordingly Auguste Mercier took up his residence in Paris, now in the Rue Mouffetard, then in the Rue de Charonne; at one time near the Barrière d’Enfer, at another on the Butte de Chaumont, always preferring some outlying locality, and never remaining long enough in one place to become what is termed “mouchique à la section,” that is to say, well known to the police.

After parting with Mr. Yates at Rouen, Auguste Mercier lost no time in conveying himself by rail to Paris, directing his steps, when he arrived there, to the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine, where, having many acquaintances, he was sure of being speedily and safely housed.

A man’s selection of a friend is not always guided by the rank he holds; and if Auguste Mercier sought his in the person of Jean Courapied, whose ostensible occupation was that of a *roulant*, or one who obtains his living by buying and selling old clothes, it is to be presumed he valued him for other qualities than the merely adventitious ones of public consideration and worldly prosperity, for, sooth to say, Jean Courapied could boast of neither. But in the absence of those virtues which, in England, ensure testimonials to their possessor—teapots of silver, and purses plump with the more precious metal—Jean Courapied had a cool head, a quick eye, and nimble fingers, which now and then helped him to a silver teapot, and occasionally, but more rarely, to a purse of gold; and it is just possible, though unacquainted with our English custom, that the Parisian *roulant* may have regarded these spoils as testimonials also—to his dexterity. Whether this were the

case or not, Jean Courapied stood high in the estimation of Auguste Mercier; and to the very high chamber in which he dwelt in the Rue Sainte-Margu rite—the eighth above the ground-floor, or the first from the roof, whichever you please to call it—Le Poulain lost no time in proceeding as soon as he had secured his own *g te*.

Youth, vast audacity, a wide sphere of action, and greater personal strength, gave the *soi-disant* horse-dealer a superiority over the merchant of old clothes which the latter did not attempt to contest. On the contrary, he considered Auguste Mercier more in the light of a patron than an equal—though the law, perhaps, would have made no such nice distinction—and was readily obedient to his orders.

As regarded trade—its condition being Mercier's first question—Courapied confessed that it was bad—very bad. The legitimate branch, he said, was in the hands of the monopolists, and that which honest men of another sort lived by was going to the dogs—nothing could be made of it.

“Imagine to yourself,” said Courapied, “from seven o'clock this morning till eleven I walked through four *arrondissements*, and only picked up one hat, two coats, and a single pair of pantaloons; then I was on the *carreau* for three hours, and could only get rid of the hat at anything like a profit; ‘The Wolf in Boots’—that's Monsieur Borel—and ‘The Blue Butterfly’—that's Madame Broc—keeping down the market to suit their own ends! What they care about most is, not the interests of poor devils like me, who do all the work, but the *revidage*—the share they get at the wine-shop, where they buy and sell without risking a *sou*. Such traffic is neither just nor generous! Those who follow it cover themselves with shame. But what does that signify to them? They fill their pockets, and leave us to starve. Then a man's opportunities are worth nothing now-a-days. The forks and spoons are all made of white metal; there's nothing solid left; nothing worth the risk of taking or the trouble of carrying. I haven't earned the price of a bottle of *eau d'aff * (brandy) this three weeks; my *ange gardien* has nothing to do; and if things go on much longer in this way, I must *balancer la canne* (turn open robber) without any more ado!”

"A sad state of affairs, indeed!" said Mercier, laughing, "but don't grumble, Jean; when things are at the worst they mend. I've not come back to sit in a corner and pare my nails. There's work to be done that I know of, *qui mettra de l'onguent dans la crépine* (which will put money in our purses); only we must be quick about it! You are high and dry, you say? *Eh bien, donc, voilà une roue de derrière* (well, then, there's a hind-wheel—a five-franc piece). *Va chercher une rouille de tortu* (go and get a bottle of wine), and then we'll talk over the affair."

*Vin bleu*, for those who can afford no better, regales many a *voyou* (scamp) in Paris; but Courapied returned with something better.

"*Vrais pivois de rougement*" (good red wine), said he, putting down the bottle with an air of pride.

"*Ah ça, sifflons la linotte*" (let us have a jolly carouse), exclaimed Mercier, gaily; "it will give you the wit to understand what I want you to do."

The two worthies then began alternately to fill and empty the mutual glass which stood between them.

"You spoke just now, Jean," said Mercier, at the first pause—"you spoke of four *arrondissements*. Numéro Douze is the favourite, of course, but did you happen to look in at Numéro Trois?"

"Nibergue!" (no!) replied Courapied; "not to-day."

"But you know it, like the rest?"

"If I know it! I should think so! Tell me the street—I was very nearly saying the house—I do not know."

"The Rue Coq-héron, for example!"

"*Ah! c'est du pétrousqin, ça!* (oh, they are all citizens there). I don't do much business in that quarter at any time. Nevertheless, I take it in my rounds."

"Well, at numéro dix, in the Rue Coq-héron, there lives a *marchand de dominos* (dentist) of the name of Clovis. Some friends of his at Rouen, where I came from this morning, have just sent him a boy to take care of, who has *valsé* (run away), or something of that sort, from the other side of *le grand salé* (the sea). Those that belong to the boy want him back again, quietly, without giving *le dabo*t (the prefect of police) any trouble. You understand! Now, I wish to find out all about the family of this Mon-



sieur Clovis ;—who they are, what they do, where they go to, and so forth. It is not quite convenient for me to be seen in that part of the town in the daytime, but you, with your *flac* (bag), may go anywhere. So, to-morrow, instead of beating up the *Quartier Latin* for the *montants* (pantalons) of the *carabins* (students), you must be off to the Rue Coq-héron, and make it your business to get all the information I require."

"And when I have got it?"

"Then I set to work."

"That is to say, you try to get hold of the boy."

"Yes."

"And afterwards?"

"We shall see."

"What is the boy like?"

"How can I tell? I never saw him. You must discover that."

"After all, it will not be difficult. Yes, you may reckon upon me. I will find out what I can."

After some further discussion, in the course of which more wine was fetched and disposed of, the friends parted for the night.

Next morning Jean Courapied was early in the field, and the Rue Coq-héron resounded to his cry—"Habits! habits! galons!"—accentuated with more than usual emphasis, its prolongation, like the voice of a ventriloquist, taking always the direction he wished to give it. But before he brought it to bear upon the domicile of Monsieur Clovis he made a careful *reconnaissance* of the premises. As if to avoid a slight shower, though had it rained cats and dogs he would have borne the pitiless pelting with indifference, he ensconced himself beneath a *porte cochère* nearly opposite, and there kept watch.

He had not waited long before three persons appeared at the street-door. He had previously observed some heads thrust out of the first floor windows, to ascertain, without doubt, if the rain were over; and now the owners of these heads seemed satisfied, and were preparing for a walk. They consisted of a man and two boys; the former seemed about forty years of age, of heroic stature—that is to say, of the height that is considered heroic in France, and which

is anything but tall—and with a good deal of importance in his aspect, as if he had always some great operation on hand, and was in every way equal to its performance. The boys were handsome lads of fifteen or sixteen, of nearly the same height, alike in complexion, but not in expression of countenance, the shorter of the two being the more vivacious, while a shade of thoughtfulness, if not of sadness, was in the smile of his companion. The question as to the weather, after a mute appeal to the sky, was settled by an approving nod from the elder of the party, and all three set off arm-in-arm down the street, Monsieur Clovis—for he was the chief personage—performing the part of *pot-à-fleurs* in the middle.

The skies brightened, and at an interval of some twenty minutes two women came down-stairs. One of them, round, pretty, and neatly dressed, was evidently the *bourgeoise*—the other, with a basket on her arm, was a servant. They were, in fact, Madame Clovis and Madeleine, her cook, on their way to the *Marché des Innocents*, for the *menu* of the *pot-au-feu*, and the inevitable salad.

Still Jean Courapiéd waited and watched, his eye roving up and down the front of *numéro dix*, and at last his patience was rewarded by seeing a young woman shake a small carpet at one of the windows of the *second*. This was the kind of person he desired to see ; and straightway he shot his voice into her ear.

“ *Habits ! habits ! galons !* ”

It seemed to be a special invitation to the young woman, who at once looked into the street. Jean Courapiéd caught her glance before it reached the pavement, and, holding up his bag, repeated his cry, but in a gentler, a more insinuating tone. The girl shook her head ; Jean Courapiéd cast an imploring look ; she shook her head again. Jean Courapiéd smiled—the girl laughed. It was enough ; he crossed the street, and disappeared in the dentist's entrance. At the same moment the girl left the window.

Half an hour afterwards the *roulant* was in the street again. His cry was still the same, but it was a mechanical movement—the mere effect of habit, for he looked neither right nor left.

And yet his bag seemed no fuller than when he went upstairs.

But his head was full, and he was in haste to impart its contents.

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## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE NORMAN GENTLEMAN.

THE information obtained by Jean Courapied consisted of everything that the *femme de chambre* was able to tell; and when a damsel like Mademoiselle Florine makes use of her tongue for half an hour, it is not difficult to suppose that a good deal may be told. As far as related to the *bourgeois* and his wife, the *marchand d'habits* learned all his employer desired; but the intelligence he received respecting the other members of the family was less precise. She could only say that the boys had just come up from the country, she believed, to finish their education in Paris; for her master, Monsieur Clovis, had taken them that very morning to begin their studies, as *externes*, at the Lycée Charlemagne.

Returning to the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine, he straightway unfolded his budget. Mercier was delighted to find the *roulant* had succeeded so well. He closely questioned his emissary about the two boys, having expected to hear of only one; but here the *roulant* was at fault: he had himself seen them both, but could not, of course, speak to their separate identity; he supposed the *Poulain* knew which he wanted; however, there they were daily, in the streets; he could point them out at any moment, and it was agreed that he should do so the same evening.

Accordingly, as the afternoon advanced, the confederates stationed themselves at a wine-shop in the Rue Saint-Antoine, and waited till the students of the Lycée Charlemagne broke up for the day. The quick eyes of Courapied soon singled out Walter and Jules, and once indicated, they lived in the Norman's recollection. But something more was necessary. To discover the English boy, Mercier followed them home, keeping as near them as he could, in the hope of overhearing

their conversation. To do this was not difficult, for they talked with all the freedom of youth, but sharp as were the Norman's ears, he could detect nothing insular in the pronunciation of either; and as what they said referred altogether to the events of the day, he very nearly had his labour for his pains. A slight incident, however, put him on the scent. It was dusk, and the two boys were within a few yards of home, when a large dog came bounding out of the doorway. The dog was Tonto, the dentist's cherished pointer, whose sporting life was an absolute sinecure, for his master never put him in the way of exercising his faculties in a legitimate manner; on the other hand, he was allowed his liberty at all seasons, muzzled or unmuzzled—it is all the same in France, whether we speak of dogs or men—and saving the opportunity of biting at will, Tonto's liberty was perfect. The pointer had just been let out, and, making a sudden rush into the street, came violently into contact with Jules Vermeil, and, getting between his legs, laid him sprawling on his back in the gutter. Jules rose in a great rage, which he vented on the unhappy dog in a favourite execration, and pursued him with the malediction till he was out of sight. Walter helped his friend out of the gutter as well as he could for laughter, in which the other now as heartily joined, and they both then ran into the house. But the words uttered had not been lost on Mercier.

“J’entends le numéro” (I’m awake now), he said to himself; and after quietly reconnoitring the locality, he retraced his steps to his own quarters.

Arrived there, he gave himself up to reflection. How should he proceed to entrap the *gamin* for whose capture he had been promised so large a reward? To carry him off by force was no easy matter; nor was it consistent with his own safety to be seen too often in the line of streets which lay between the Rue Coq-héron and the Lycée Charlemagne. Some stratagem must be devised to lure the boy separately—or, if need were, with his companion—to a remoter part of the town; and then, with the assistance of the *roulant*, the abduction might be effected. To make acquaintance, casually, with either or both of the boys, should be his first proceeding.

We have said that Auguste Mercier was well-looking, and

to this advantage he added as good an address as knavery can wear, the difference being understood between the *fripou* and the honest man. In the character of a horse-dealer, the *blouse* and the *bonnet de nuit* were appropriate enough; but the Norman knew the value of external appearance too well to trust to that costume in his present undertaking. He must figure as a *rupin* (gentleman), and to procure the necessary disguise he had only to go to Jean Courapiéd.

The resources of the *marchand d'habits* were at once at Mercier's service, and he was speedily equipped in the attire of a person of fashion. Besides the physical fit, there was a moral fitness in the dress he chose, for it had just been purchased of the valet of a minister who, though the fact was not publicly known, at least at that time, was to the full as great a rascal as Auguste Mercier himself. Nevertheless, the Norman walked the streets without being mistaken for the minister, and, what was more to the purpose, without being recognized in his own individual capacity.

By dint of constant observation Mercier soon became acquainted with the habits of the family in the Rue Coq-héron. He knew all about the sporting weaknesses of Monsieur Clovis,—this was partly attributable to the original revelations of Mademoiselle Florine: he knew that Madame Clovis did not object to pleasure excursions; he knew that the boy he had his eye on was as gay and thoughtless as if he had been born a Frenchman; and, knowing all these things, he resolved to take the earliest opportunity of turning his knowledge to account.

One fine morning the Norman, being on the watch, observed an unusual bustle in the dentist's apartments; and his conclusion that the family were preparing for some expedition was presently confirmed by the appearance in the street of Florine, who, whisking round the corner, returned with a *citadine*, into which Monsieur and Madame Clovis entered, accompanied by Walter and Jules. Mercier was near enough to hear the dentist desire the *cocher* to drive to the railway station in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and thither he immediately proceeded in another carriage, arriving in time to see the party get out. Keeping close behind them, he soon found by the repeated inquiries of Monsieur Clovis, that their destination was Asnières, the great suburban place

of recreation for all the *badauds* of Paris. As the dentist was rushing to and fro, demanding of every one which was the right *bureau*, Mercier stepped up, and with great politeness offered to conduct him to it, remarking that he also was bound for the same place. They took their tickets at the same time, and a first act of civility accomplished, the Norman followed it up by another. He was in the constant habit, he said, of travelling up and down the line, and knew the position of all the carriages: it would be a very great pleasure to show monsieur and madame—here he took off his hat—those which were for Asnières.

Upon the invitation of Monsieur Clovis—he should not otherwise have dreamt of intruding—Mercier entered the same compartment; and it so happening that no one else joined them, he laid himself out to improve the occasion. Deferential compliments to madame, solid observations to monsieur, and pleasant words to the boys, soon established him in the good graces of all the party; and, by the time they reached Asnières he had accepted the dentist's offer to share the amusements of the day. He did so with a little reserve, still fearing to intrude; but Monsieur Clovis would take no denial, and when the entreaty was enforced by the smiling request of madame, the Norman's hat went off again, and he placed himself entirely at the lady's disposition.

If there is one thing that a Parisian understands less than another, and if, at the same time, there is one thing in which a Parisian experiments oftener than another when out for a holiday, that thing is the mysterious science called “canotage”—a word which we should translate by “boating,” if the word were in the slightest degree applicable. Asnières is the head-quarters of the *canotiers* of Paris; and a marvellous sight it is to assist at its regattas. There was probably nobody in the whole department who enjoyed these aquatic festivities more than Monsieur Clovis; certainly nobody seemed to give himself up to them with so much *abandon*: it was the supplementary feature of his intensely sporting nature. To hire a *canot* was, then, his first proceeding after leaving the train, and it was only after some discussion with Madame Clovis that he was dissuaded from leaving the professional *canotier* on shore, when the party embarked on the perilous flood—for perilous it would indeed have proved

without the presence of a steersman. Walter and Jules were by no means novices in boatcraft, for they had often pulled on the Seine, at Rouen,—the Norman was able also to manage an oar,—but the dentist, who professed to know the most, was, I am sorry to say, as utter a tyro as ever floated. The “crabs” he caught; the way in which he all but dislocated his arms in pulling the boat round; the false strokes with which he splashed the universe, were feats of aquatic skill which required to be seen to be believed in. Belief, however, was easy for those who did see; and none of the spectators had much difficulty in exercising their trusting faculties, for in every *canot*—and there were hundreds on the water—a similar exhibition was being simultaneously madê, amidst the shrieks, and shouts, and laughter, as well of those on board the boats as of the multitudes that lined the river’s brink. None of the party appeared to enter into the fun with greater relish than Auguste Mercier, though all the while the darkest thoughts ran in his mind. To upset the boat and drown them all; to escape himself and plunder the dentist’s house; to hurry to England with proofs of the boy’s death—ah! he forgot, that was prohibited—he must deliver him alive: well, let them live—let them be gay—he would be gay, too, till the moment arrived for being serious.

The *promenade sur l’eau*—it is a good phrase, and suits the Parisians—was, therefore, accomplished without any fatal result; and when even Monsieur Clovis had had enough of it, the party landed for dinner at the *restaurant* in the park. The repast was a famous one; Madame Clovis vowed it was “*délicieux*,” and in the best taste; Walter pronounced it first-rate, and his opinion was echoed by Jules; and what the little dentist thought of it may be gathered from the fact that he graced its consumption by calling for three successive bottles of champagne. And the Norman? He was so impressed with the excellence of the dinner, that he positively insisted on paying for it, and, but for two reasons, he would have done so: in the first place, Monsieur Clovis would not hear of such a thing; and in the next, it was never his intention to keep his word. But the demonstration was sufficient: it satisfied the exhilarated dentist that Monsieur Delablage—so the Norman now called him-

self—was a man of perfect honour and worthy of his friendship.

After dinner there was a promenade through the park ; after the promenade, dancing ; after the dancing, fireworks ; and after the fireworks a merry scramble to the train, and a lively, though somewhat noisy, conversation—interspersed with song—all the way back to Paris. Everybody declared they had never spent so pleasant a day ; and, for their parts, Monsieur and Madame Clovis felt certain they had never met with so agreeable a person as Monsieur Delablague. What added to his merit was, perhaps, the fact, that he had invited them all to be his guests in an excursion on the following Sunday to Saint-Germain. He would, he said, have gladly accepted the invitation of Monsieur Clovis to dine in the *interim* in the Rue Coq-héron, but, unfortunately, business of importance compelled him to visit his estates in Normandy, and he should not be able to return to Paris till the end of the week. It was therefore arranged that the party should assemble at a given hour at the *embarcadère*, in the Rue Saint-Lazare, where he had first had the honour of meeting with monsieur and madame.

And with his hat in hand and a very low bow, the Norman gentleman took leave of his amiable friends, leaving behind him, as we have said, the most enviable reputation.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE FETE DES LOGES.

IF Monsieur Delablague had done it on purpose—which, of course, was out of the question—he could not have hit upon a more appropriate day for this proposed excursion than that which had been chosen. It was the *Fête des Loges*, a festival which always empties Paris of its pleasure-seeking multitudes, very much as, with reference to London, Fairlop-fair, or more-recently-extinguished Greenwich, were wont to do : and its resemblance to those once popular holidays was as close as the several specialities of French and English



entertainment admit of. There were the same sort of theatres, booths, and shows, the same quacks, prodigies, and nondescripts, the same devices for fixing the attention of the public, and the same inducements held out to them to eat, drink, and be merry; if dancing were more in the ascendant, and the military element more circumfused in the arrangements of the the *Fête des Loges*, these differences must be ascribed to what artists call the local colour—in other words, to the tastes and habits of the French people.

To the family in the Rue Coq-héron the *Fête des Loges* held out the additional attraction of novelty. Once in his life Monsieur Clovis had been there, and though it was a long time ago, his recollection of its amusements was sufficiently vivid to furnish him with plenty to talk about, infinitely to the delight of Walter and Jules, whose experience was limited to the annual fair of Rouen, an absolute nothing in comparison—so Monsieur Clovis said.

As usual, it seemed to all the party as if the expected Sunday would never arrive, but it came at last; and not one minute beyond the time appointed the guests of Monsieur Delablague ascended the steps of the station, where the Norman gentleman was already waiting. He was not, however, alone, but begged to present his friend—in point of fact, the intendant of his estates, whom he had brought up with him from Normandy—by name Courapied; and a good name it was, Monsieur Delablague jocosely observed, for one who had so much ground to get over as fell to the lot of the intendant of so large a property.

The appearance of this individual was not very much in his favour; he had a very grimy face, and hands to match, as if soap were not amongst the luxuries in which he indulged; his coat, though lustrous, did not, somehow, appear quite new; his pantaloons wore a gloss which the dyer could, perhaps, have accounted for better than the tailor; and there was a peculiar gleam in the varnish of his boots which might have suggested to a frequenter of "The Black Forest" in the "Halle aux Chiffons" that they had only just left the *boutique* of the *mastiqueur*, a class of persons so called from their skill in reviving old leather. There was, in short, a kind of dirty glitter about the whole person and apparel of the intendant which showed to more advantage

by gas-light than beneath the rays of the noontide sun. But, after all, what does dress signify? The man it covers is the question; and if the intendant merited the esteem of his master, and Monsieur Delablague declared he did, why should anybody sneer at his rusty habiliments? That he was disposed to be useful on all occasions there could be no doubt, for he carried a large basket, which the Norman gentleman pointed to with an air of great satisfaction, remarking to Madame Clovis that on occasions like the present he always laid in his provisions in Paris: as to the wine, that was to be had of excellent quality at Saint-Germain. But besides his utility, there was one point about the intendant which particularly recommended him to Madame Clovis; he appeared to be very fond of young people, following in that respect the example of Monsieur Delablague, who warmly shook hands with Walter and Jules, as well as with Monsieur Clovis. Jules returned these demonstrations with much more fervour than Walter, who was not so impressionable as his friend, and rather shunned than courted the notice of his new acquaintance. He might, however, have been ten times colder than he was, without in the least affecting the gaiety of the Norman gentleman, or the good humour of the intendant.

Saint-Germain, the cynosure of the Parisians, offers many points of resemblance to our own Richmond, but its attractions are even greater. From its lofty terrace, which overhangs the Seine above a vine-covered slope for more than half a league, the view embraces an immense panorama, closed in the foreground by the Château of Maisons on the left hand and the Aqueduct of Marly on the right, and extending, as far as the eye can reach, from the woods of Montmorency to the distant heights of Montmartre, the light vapour that floats over Paris failing to obscure the city's noblest monuments, amongst which the Arc de l'Etoile and the dome of the Invalides stand out in conspicuous relief; while intermediately appear, amidst the windings of the river and broad masses of foliage, a countless host of shining villages and sites that have long been historical. History, too, offers much in Saint-Germain itself; its old castle, which witnessed the celebrated *coup de Jarnac* in the ever-memorable duel; its *Château Neuf*, built by Henri Quatre,

where his daughter, the widowed queen of Charles I., ended her days, where the Grand Monarque first saw the light, where James II. of England kept his melancholy court, and closed his ignominious career, and where that which was once a royal chapel is now a famous *restaurant*; but, above all, its wide-spreading forest, with its hunting pavilions and lodges, the last of which have given their name to the coveted *fête* of the French metropolis.

With the beauty of the scenery the Clovis party were enraptured; but historical associations did not much disturb them. With all his accomplishments, the dentist was not very deeply read; his wife's *forte* lay elsewhere; Walter and Jules were only too willing to forget everything that savoured of their studies; and as for the Norman gentleman and his follower, it would be doing them a great injustice to suppose that they thought more of the past than the present.

Monsieur Delablague, indeed, had such practical ideas, that the first thing he did was to send the intendant to secure an agreeable spot in the forest, where, after enjoying the pleasures of the *fête*, the party might assemble to dine; he also gave him one or two other commissions, assuring Madame Clovis, whose good nature would have retained him to share in their amusements, that not to perform his accustomed duties would render honest Courapiéd supremely unhappy. This being so, the intendant took his departure, laden with his basket, and Monsieur Delablague was left to entertain his guests alone. He was quite familiar with all the localities; and after a rapid promenade through the parterres and the environs of the *château*, he led them, where all the world was streaming, to the avenue that conducted to the head-quarters of the *fête*, which was held in an open space in the middle of the forest. There were sights and sounds which gave tokens of its existence long before the scene of festivity was reached. The joyous temperament of the holiday-makers declared itself from afar with the noisiest and most explosive manifestations, the laughter and shouts of the crowd at one moment rising high above, at the next being altogether lost in, the beating of drums, the roaring of wild beasts, and the crashing of instrumental music; while every one hurried onward as if life and death depended on the race, as if a moment lost were never to be

redeemed, though all knew that a hundred repetitions of the same spectacle awaited them throughout the day.

On the outer rays of this focus of enjoyment were *saltimbanques* of every description:—intrepid gladiators slaying each other after the highest Roman fashion,—wonderful athletes, for whom no weight seemed too heavy, no feat of strength too unattainable,—flexible men whose attitudes, no less than their words, proclaimed them to be boneless,—vaulter, dancers, tumblers, who spent half their time in the air, and only asked for free space in which to display their agility, and a few sous to reward them for it. Within this circle appeared the exhibition of trained animals,—hares beating drums, monkeys fighting duels, dogs counterfeiting death for desertion, the victims of implacable courts-martial; then hideous people who made exhibition of themselves,—deformed men with exaggerated heads and movable humps,—children whose faces were of two colours, black on one profile, white on the other,—porcupine youths, bristling all over with quills,—ladies six feet high with redundant whiskers,—savages, dwarfs, giants, and giantesses, cannibals, and the devourers of stones and serpents. Then, as you drew nearer the centre, were offered more intellectual pleasures; the fine arts attracted on one side with panoramic views and running descriptions of all the cities, mountains, rivers, ruins, waterfalls, deserts, and volcanoes in the universe—on the other, the drama loudly called attention to the latest and most popular French victory, to the bloodiest and most authentic French murder, and to scenes of the fiercest love, the most overwhelming jealousy, the deadliest revenge, that ever were presented on the stage, at rates varying from one to five sous for each admission; and intermixed with and confounding all, the drum, the gong, the horn, the clarionet, the cymbals, the trombone. stunned every ear and confused every listening faculty.

“Through this mixed crowd of glee and game” the Clovis party roved delightedly, by no means the worst customers to the various shows and theatres. It was the privilege of Walter to take care of Madame Clovis, for her husband chose to *flâner* by himself, and Monsieur Delablague had taken Jules under his special protection. Several hours passed in the gratification of their appetite for wonders, and

then they began to think it was time to gratify an appetite for something more substantial. Jean Courapied, who returned with the information that he had found exactly the sort of place he was sent in search of, now undertook to show them the spot. It certainly did credit to his taste for the picturesque, as far as that consisted in loneliness, for it was in one of the most solitary parts of the forest. Thither, in the course of the morning, he had carried all that was provided for the sylvan repast, including some of the notable wine which Monsieur Delablague had spoken of, and he had spread it on the turf at the foot of a large oak which bore the name of Saint-Fiacre, that popular Parisian saint, the patron of the hackney-coachman, having also a *fête* of his own in the forest of Saint-Germain.

After the noise and confusion of the day, it was delicious, said Monsieur Delablague, to get away from the crowd to a quiet place like this. Madame Clovis echoed this sentiment, and her husband declared he would not let Saint-Rémi go by without endeavouring to obtain permission to shoot here; on hearing which remark, the Norman gentleman observed that Monsieur Clovis need take no trouble on that head, as he, unless he deceived himself, had interest enough with the administrator-general of the royal domains to procure him the privilege of "le sport" whenever he wished to use it. In the happy frame of mind produced by this announcement, Monsieur Clovis sat down to dine, and equally happy seemed all the rest of the party: Monsieur Delablague had catered liberally, the viands were excellent, the wines abundant, and nothing could exceed the hospitality of the host or the active ministration of his intendant, so that altogether a gayer party than that which was now gathered together had seldom met in the forest of Saint-Germain.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## THE END OF A FETE CHAMPETRE.

A *fête champêtre*, when skies are propitious and the company in good humour, is so agreeable a thing, that it is a pity harm should ever come of one; and yet some of the pleasantest pic-nics we have known have been marred at the close by an unlooked-for *contretemps*: the sword hangs over our heads whether we dine beneath a gilded ceiling or under the greenwood tree.

If Monsieur Delablague had any defect in his capacity of founder of the feast, it was simply that his hospitality was a trifle too pressing. He not only set the example of drinking freely, but seemed anxious that all his guests should do the same. Madame Clovis, of course, easily excused herself; and on the part of Walter and Jules she said that, having been brought up in a cider country, they had no liking for wine. There remained, therefore, only Monsieur Clovis and the intendant to do justice to the *rasades* of the noble Norman.

At first the same wine went indiscriminately round, but when Monsieur Delablague suggested "toasts," he caused a separate bottle to be placed before each.

"I remember, monsieur," he said, addressing Clovis, "that when I had the honour of dining in your society, last Sunday, at Asnières, you regretted that the *restaurateur* had none of your favourite Pomard. I have been fortunate enough to get some which Courapied was assured is excellent. I trust, however, that we shall not be obliged to drink it all ourselves, but that madame will yield to your importunity, if not to mine, and taste what you yourself prefer!"

"You are too good, monsieur," replied the lady, laughing. "Clovis and I have different tastes. Burgundy is too heady for me; besides, I have taken quite sufficient, and I think, *mon ami*," she said to her husband, "you are exposed to some danger there."

"How?—danger, madame?" asked the Norman rather hastily.

"If he drinks a whole bottle of Pomard," returned Madame Clovis.

"Don't be afraid, wife," said the dentist; "we *chasseurs* can stand a good deal. Can't we, Monsieur Delablague?"

"You are right," observed the Norman; "there is nothing so fortifying as an out-of-door life. I am constantly in the open air, and so is my intendant. You do not find this wine heady, Courapied?"

"See, it goes down like water!" said the intendant.

"Stop! stop!" cried Monsieur Delablague; "you go too fast for us. I wish to give a toast. Since madame will not join, we must take our revenge by drinking her health. Fill again, Courapied. A la santé de Madame Clovis!"

The toast was duly honoured, and as the dentist drained his glass, the Norman winked at his confederate, and made a mark with his left thumb on his left cheek, which the other repeated.

Walter, who happened to be looking at Monsieur Delablague, observed this signal, and was struck at the same moment by the villanous expression of the Norman's countenance: a single moment had sufficed entirely to change its character. It made him feel uneasy, nor was that uneasiness removed when the Norman smiled again. He began to fear he was in bad company, and resolved to take the first opportunity of imparting his thoughts to Monsieur Clovis. Little chance, however, was afforded him of doing so, for Monsieur Delablague kept up a quick fire of toasts, and to every one of them the dentist responded. Finally, the Norman gave: "Au premier chasseur de Paris," coupling with it the name of Monsieur Clovis; and to this direct compliment the hero of the plain of Montrouge felt himself called upon to reply.

He did so in terms which, fluent at first, became less and less clear as he proceeded, until his language grew quite unintelligible, and he suddenly came to a dead stop; he looked round him with a stupefied air, stammered out a word or two more, closed his eyes, opened his mouth to yawn, and then fell back against the tree at the foot of which he was sitting, with his head hanging on his shoulder.

Madame Clovis, Walter, and Jules all started up in affright and ran to his assistance.

"Qu'as-tu, mon ami," cried his wife, "art thou indisposed? What has arrived to thee, Noël? Speak then!"

But Noël Clovis was much too far gone to speak. The drugged wine had done its work effectually.

The Norman, who professed great anxiety, inquired if Monsieur Clovis was subject to fits, and being answered in the negative, gave it as his opinion that the heat of the day and the excitement of the *fête* had caused this indisposition, which he trusted was only temporary. But while his lips said one thing his eyes said another, and again Walter noticed the same sinister expression which he had observed before.

After repeated but fruitless efforts to revive the dentist, who now lay with his head in his wife's lap, his eyes closed and breathing heavily, Monsieur Delablague proposed that they should go for medical assistance.

"Courapied," he said "shall hasten to Saint-Germain—you, monsieur" (addressing Walter), "can run down this avenue to the fair, where, doubtless, there are doctors enough for our purpose—I shall have the honour to stay——"

"No!" said Walter, interrupting the Norman; "Jules and I will remain with Madame Clovis. You know this place, sir, better than we do. As it is getting dark, I might lose my way."

"You are afraid, it appears, of being in the dark!" said the Norman, with a sneer.

"I should be afraid," retorted Walter, "to leave Madame Clovis here at such an hour, and——" he was about to say "with you," but he checked himself.

"Prove your courage, then, monsieur, by staying alone. I will go to the Loges; and your friend, who evidently is without apprehensions, shall accompany me. Two can search better than one."

Jules eagerly embraced this proposal: he had been captivated by the Norman's ostentatious kindness throughout the day, and felt, moreover, a strong desire to have another peep at the *fête*.



"Jules may do as he likes," said Walter; "I, at all events, mean to protect Madame Clovis."

The Norman laughed derisively.

"Adieu! madame," he said. "I leave you with your protector! We will return, however, as quickly as possible. Be off, Courapiéd—*file le sinve*" (a cant term for "keep on our track").

"Excuse me an instant, monsieur," said the intendant: "I may want my basket to bring back medicine."

So saying, he caught it up and disappeared;—Monsieur Delablague and Jules turned down another avenue, and Walter was left alone with Madame Clovis, who was still endeavouring to restore her husband, and had paid little attention to the conversation.

As the voices ceased, however, she looked round, and perceived Walter standing beside her.

"I thought you had gone too," she said.

"No, madame!" replied Walter; "I could not leave you quite alone. What do you think is the matter with Monsieur Clovis?"

"It is impossible for me to say," she answered. "I never saw him so before. He continues quite insensible, but seems in no pain. It is astonishing!"

"I wish we had never come to this *fête!*" said Walter. "This misfortune would not then have happened."

"God knows!" replied Madame Clovis. "Noël might have been taken ill at home!"

"But that would have been different. You have a doctor who lives next door."

"Ah, yes! I wish he were here. Oh, mon Dieu, if Noël were to die!"

It was a natural association—the doctor first, then death—and Madame Clovis, whose firmness had endured till now, gave way to tears. She sat with her handkerchief to her face, and Walter, fearing to disturb her, remained silent.

Half an hour went by in this manner. At last she spoke.

"Are they not gone a long while?" she asked.

"Quite long enough, I think," replied Walter, "to have been back before this. I almost wish now that I had gone. I should have told the first person I met what I wanted, and soon have got a doctor, if there was one to be found.

But I did not like what Monsieur Delablague said, nor the way in which he looked before he spoke to me ; so I stayed."

"How did he look, then ? I observed nothing."

"Oh, so wickedly ! As if he wished to kill somebody."

"When was that ?"

"Before Monsieur Clovis was taken ill, and afterwards. I wish I knew what those words were."

"What words, *mon ami* ?"

"Oh, something he said in a sort of *patois* to that dirty-looking fellow Courapied, before they set off. But never mind, Madame Clovis. It may have meant nothing. Only I wish Jules would return with the doctor."

"Stay !" exclaimed Madame Clovis. "I hear some one coming."

Walter jumped up hastily and looked down the avenue.

"No," said he ; "you were mistaken."

"I thought I heard voices. There !"

Walter listened.

"Yes, that was a cry, certainly."

"Hark !"

Once more they listened. It was no mistake. The cry seemed nearer.

"A moi ! à moi ! Wal-terre !" came shrilly along the glade.

"It is the voice of Jules," said Walter. "Good God ! what can have happened to him ?"

"Oh, run—run and see."

"But you, Madame Clovis ?"

"Never mind me ; I shall be well enough here till you come back."

Walter needed no more urging. He rushed down the avenue, and at the first opening in the forest took the direction from whence the sounds proceeded. He ran straight on for several hundred yards ; the cry, which before seemed on his right hand, now came from the left ; he had overshot the place, and turning back dashed along a narrower path, that led more into the heart of the forest. Other voices, as he advanced, mingled with that which first had reached his ear ; but distinguishable above them was the screaming appeal of Jules. Walter forced his way through

a tangled brake, and came out upon an open clearing. Though the day was fast waning, sufficient light remained to enable him to see Jules struggling between the Norman and Jean Courapied, the latter trying to bind him while he writhed in the arms of the former. Without pausing to consider the disparity of his strength, or its uselessness, against that of two powerful men, Walter leaped over the trunk of a fallen tree, and with another bound threw himself on Courapied. The *roulant* staggered beneath the sudden assault, but quickly recovering himself, uttered a tremendous oath, and dropping the coil of rope, shook off the adventurous boy.

"Villains!" shouted Walter, panting for breath, "release my friend."

"Ah, it is thee, Wal-terre," cried Jules. "Oh, for Heaven's sake, messieurs, let me go!"

"Release him, I say," reiterated Walter; and as he spoke he darted past the *roulant*, and claspings Jules round the body strove to drag him from the Norman's grasp.

"Satire-mâtin!" growled Mercier; "haul this imp off, Courapied!"

The *roulant* seized Walter by the arm and nearly twisted it out of the socket, compelling him thus to relinquish his hold of Jules, but it was only to fasten on his cowardly assailant, who now tried to throw him on the ground; vainly, however, for Walter clung to him like a limpet to a rock.

"Throw yourself down upon him!" shouted the Norman, "while I settle this one,"—which he did by striking Jules a heavy blow on the head that felled him to the earth. The *roulant* meantime executed the manœuvre suggested by Mercier, and fell with Walter, hoping to crush him beneath his weight; but the boy was too quick for him, and when they reached the ground he was uppermost, with his knees on Courapied's chest and his hands on his throat.

"He will strangle me!" gasped the *roulant*; and this consummation might have chanced if the Norman had not now come to the rescue. Fixing his strong hand on Walter's collar he tore him from the prostrate man and hurled him several paces off. Agile as a panther, Walter recovered

his feet and ran to raise Jules, who had swooned from the effects of the Norman's blow.

"Cowards! villains!" he cried, "you have killed him! Ah, my dear, dear Jules! Help! help! Murder! murder!"

For a moment the two ruffians held colloquy together.

"Comment faire cesser ce clarinage?" (how shall we stop this noise?)

"Faut faire goûter le lingre" (he must taste the steel).

It was the Norman who spoke last, and he drew a knife from his breast. The light fell on the blade, and Walter guessed his intention. To resist an armed man would have been madness; there was space between them still; his only hope of escape was in flight.

And, active as he was, he might have succeeded, had he been familiar with the forest paths; but he took a wrong turning, and found himself headed by the *roulant*, who had separated from the Norman to intercept him. He turned again, but it was only to confront his second and most formidable pursuer. Once more he raised his voice and shouted for help with all his might. Alas, there was no help for the unhappy boy! The fierce Norman was upon him. One moment the knife glittered in the air—the next it was buried in Walter's bosom. He reeled and fell.

"Il ne gouale plus" (he has left off singing), said the *Roulant*, coming up.

"Non, c'est fumé!" (no, it's all up with him), replied Mercier, wiping the bloody knife.

"I think so," said the *roulant*, kneeling down. "What's to be done with the body?"

"Jette-le dans le pousse-moulin" (throw it into the river), returned the Norman, "if you like to carry it there. I must go back and secure the young God-dem."

"No, thank you, said Courapied, "the load is too heavy. I'll lighten it, however, for the next comer."

And he immediately began searching Walter's pockets. There was not much in them; only a handkerchief and an empty purse—the last embroidered with the letter C. It was the gift of poor Cécile.

"Au diable la marmite!" (the devil take the purse), exclaimed the disappointed rascal, "but it will sell for some-

thing ;” and thrusting it with the handkerchief into his own pocket, he got up and followed the Norman.

He found him lifting Jules from the ground.

“Où est la roulotte ?” (where is the carriage ?) asked Mercier.

“Labago” (down there), answered the other, pointing over his shoulder.

“Laissons derrière le sabris. V’là la luisante qui paraît !” (let us get out of the forest. The moon is rising).

Making a cradle of their arms, they carried Jules with stealthy steps to the edge of the forest, where the wall recently broken down offered the means of exit. A *patache* was standing beneath a tree, to which the horse was fastened. Courapié got in, and Jules, resistless and hardly conscious, was placed beside him. The Norman then untied the animal, leaped quickly on the driving-seat, and freely applying the whip, took a by-way across the country till he fell into the road called “Le chemin de Quarante Sous,” which leads direct to Mantes.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### BAD NEWS.

THE vicissitudes of a life of labour had taught Monsieur Perrotin philosophy. He had learned how to bear with personal privation, and could suffer for himself alone without a murmur. But philosophy had not yet instructed him in the art—which many acquire so easily—of not feeling for the privations and sufferings of others ; and his attachments, where he formed them, were deep and enduring. It was not in the hey-day of young blood, nor with the fervour of youthful passion, that he had courted Rachel Loring ; he was attracted towards her by the calm conviction that in marrying her his happiness would be secured, and this conviction had not deceived him. The closer his acquaintance grew, the stronger became his affection, till the common but unreasoning process was reversed, and that which began in

esteem ended in love, and this without any jealous alloy, for what Rachel loved, Monsieur Perrotin loved also. Hence his fondness for Walter was second only to his fondness for his wife. The departure of the boy on whose education he had bestowed so much care, was a pang to him, but still greater was the enforced journey of Rachel, though his loneliness was relieved by the letters which came from both. When, however, these communications ceased, and days of expectation went by without any tidings from either of them, Monsieur Perrotin's philosophy was rather severely tested. Walter's silence might, indeed, be accounted for by the numerous distractions of his new mode of life, but that of his wife was a painful enigma. Her last letter told him of her arrival in Yorkshire and of the accidental meeting with Matthew Yates, and she then promised to keep him *au courant* of everything that befel her, day by day as it occurred,—yet now a whole week had gone by without a single line!

As long as he could, Monsieur Perrotin kept his apprehensions to himself, but the heart—even of a philosopher—demands expansion; and one morning, after waiting for a full hour beyond the postman's accustomed time, and waiting as usual in vain, he sallied forth to take counsel with Monsieur and Madame Vermeil.

It was a fine autumnal day, and the golden sun, the clear blue sky, and the freshly-blowing air, seemed to invigorate and enliven all the out-of-door world, as Monsieur Perrotin passed on his way to the Rue des Carmes. There, too, the sun shone brightly, casting his strongest rays on the confectioner's glowing shop, and leaving the other side of the street in darkest shadow. For conformity's sake, it ought, perhaps, to have been otherwise, but Nature delights in contrasts, and often wears the gayest aspect when man's heart is at the saddest. That of Monsieur Perrotin was heavy enough at the moment, but was destined soon to be much heavier.

The functions of *demoiselle de boutique* were generally performed by Mademoiselle Cécile, when that young lady was at home from school, but on this occasion the care of the shop had been confided to a neighbour, a somewhat sweet-toothed old personage, who, in reply to Monsieur

Perrotin's inquiry after Madame Vermeil, said, as well as a mouth full of strawberry jam would allow her to speak, that a great misfortune had just happened to the family.

"Good Heavens! What could it be? To whom did it relate?" were Monsieur Perrotin's instant questions.

*That*, the old lady, still hampered by the strawberry-jam, could not take upon herself exactly to say. Madame Vermeil's *bonne* had only summoned her five minutes before, while she herself ran for the doctor, because her mistress was in violent hysterics. She had been requested to mind the confectioner's shop, and she was doing so (after her own fashion) when monsieur came in.

Whatever concerned the Vermeil family affected Monsieur Perrotin; moreover, a vague fear impressed him, and he stopped to ask no more questions, but ran hastily up stairs, leaving the substitute of Mademoiselle Cécile to diminish the confectioner's stock at her leisure.

The hysterics had not been overstated. Madame Vermeil was lying on a sofa in her husband's arms, sobbing and laughing wildly, while Cécile, pale as a sheet, knelt on the floor, with difficulty retaining one of her mother's hands in hers. This was the scene that met Monsieur Perrotin's view as he entered the room.

"Ah, my friend!" said Vermeil, looking round as Cécile pronounced their visitor's name—"I am glad—and sorry, too—to see thee."

"Say what has happened?" cried Perrotin.

"Cécile, give that letter. Ah, calm thyself, my angel, my cherished one! Thy child will yet be restored to thee!"

But the husband's words were unavailing; Madame Vermeil still sobbed and struggled, a prey to the strongest emotion.

Monsieur Perrotin would have withdrawn, but the confectioner begged him to remain, while Cécile placed in his hands the letter of which her father had spoken. Thus urged, he read as follows:

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—A sad calamity, difficult to relate, has overtaken us all. Noël, for whose life I have had fears, is still lying on a bed of sickness, and the children—ah, ~~there~~, *mon Dieu*, that is what is the most afflicting—how

shall I tell you things which I do not myself understand? But yet all that I know must be told. Listen then! A week ago we all went to the *Fête des Loges* in the forest of Saint-Germain—it is four leagues from Paris, and everybody goes there—in the company of a newly-made acquaintance, Monsieur Delablague, a so-called Norman gentleman, who, indeed, invited us to be of his party. He had with him a person named Courapied, the intendant of his estates, who alone acted as his servant. The *fête* was brilliant; your dear Jules and his friend, for whom I have an equal regard, enjoyed all they saw, the *spectacles* above everything else. At a late hour of the afternoon we repaired to dine in a part of the forest called the Carrefour of the Châsse de Saint-Fiacre, and scarcely was the dinner over when Noël was attacked by a stupefaction which threw him into a sudden swoon, the cause of which it was impossible for me then to divine, though, since, its real nature has been established. On this event arriving, all, except Walter, who stayed with me, went off quickly in search of medical assistance, your dear child Jules accompanying Monsieur Delablague, while the other person took a different direction. For a long time we waited, Noël always in the same state of prostration, but nobody returned. At length cries of distress came to our ears; we heard the voice of Jules calling for help, and then Walter ran to find and save his friend. Faintly, after a while, I heard other sounds, and then all was once more still. I was in despair! Impossible for me to leave Noël, who lay on the ground like a person dead; useless that I should search in the depth of night in that forest for those dear boys! I could only kneel in my tears and pray to the *bon Dieu* for help, which was granted at last, but—I dare not conceal it from you—to me only. It was daylight: I had passed the night in fruitless attempts to restore my husband—in vainly screaming the names of the lost children—when a *garde champêtre* came to the spot. What we had desired the night before on Noël's account was then procured—a conveyance to remove him to the nearest surgeon, who at once declared that my husband had been made the victim of an infamous plot, the wine given him to drink having caused his stupefaction, from which it needed the utmost skill to recover him. But the darkest



part of the affair consisted not in this so cowardly project—it showed itself in the disappearance of the darling boys, of whom we could obtain no news, though for what purpose they have been carried away it is not possible to imagine. At once researches were made in the forest, but all to no purpose, and since that time the police of the department and of Paris are making constant inquiry, hitherto, however—and my heart bleeds that I should have to say so—without success. I am lost in astonishment not less than is my sorrow at this so cruel bereavement. Be of some comfort, notwithstanding, for it is certain—as the police observe—that the boys have sustained no personal injury. Had they worn fine clothes, with rings and watches and much money, it might have been different; but this, they say, is an abduction for some particular purpose, which time, and the opportunities that the police always have, will bring to light. I embrace you both, and dearest Cécile, with all my heart; and Noël—from his bed—does the same. Your desolate but devoted friend for life,

“ROSALIE CLOVIS.

“Be persuaded that if we receive intelligence of the lost ones I write immediately.”

Monsieur Perrotin's dismay on reading this letter was little less than that of his unhappy friends. His first thought was for Rachel. What would be the effect on her of this distressing news? The entire object of her journey to England—that journey which she had undertaken at so much risk—was, through this unlooked-for misadventure, completely frustrated! And by what means? Who were this Norman and his intendant? No mention was made by Madame Clovis of any third person, or the suspicions of Monsieur Perrotin would naturally have fallen on the Englishman Yates. But he knew that Yates was in England, a fact which had already awakened his fears on Rachel's own account. Then, what motive had these men for carrying off Jules—the disappearance of Walter being apparently only the consequence of his courageous interference? In the midst, however, of his own distress, he could not witness the grief of Madame Vermeil without endeavouring to add to the consolation which her husband offered. By degrees,

and by the aid of Monsieur Bellegueule, the *pharmacien*, who came and administered a *tisane*, the universal French remedy whether sorrow or stomach-ache afflict the patient, she became more composed, and consented to lie down, with Cécile at her side, while Vermeil and Monsieur Perrotin took counsel together as to the course they should pursue. The discussion was a long one, many plans were proposed and rejected, but eventually they came to the conclusion that the confectioner should go at once to Paris, while the teacher of languages remained in Rouen. If, at the end of a week, no tidings of the boys were obtained, and nothing was heard of Rachel, Monsieur Perrotin announced his intention of proceeding direct to England, not only for the purpose of finding his wife, but for that of exposing the whole situation respecting Walter, fearlessly and without reserve, to Sir James and Lady Tunstall.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

ON the night that proved so disastrous to poor Walter, the forest of Saint-Germain was traversed by two travellers in a cabriolet, who, somewhat belated, were making the best of their way along the high road from Pontoise to Versailles. Their journey that day had been a long one for a single horse, and the animal, with that aptitude for crawling which distinguishes French horses the moment they feel the collar, took advantage of a very slight inequality in the ground to proceed at his most leisurely pace. This characteristic was impatiently commented on by one of the travellers, who spoke with a strong Irish accent.

"See there now, doctor," he exclaimed, "the confounded baste is at it again! I give you my word of honer, the road's as level as a billiard-table, there's not the rise of an inch in a hundred yards; but it's my belief that the garrons in this country, bad luck to 'em, have their forelegs longer than their hind ones: they're only made for going down hill. Sure we'll never get home to-night!"

"Give him the whip again, colonel," said his companion.

"The whip, is it? faith, he minds that no more than he would a sermon. I declare to you, doctor, I'm quite sore with bating him."

"That ought to be his case, not yours," replied the other, "though I must say he's not very thin-skinned."

"Thin-skinned! his hide is as tough as an alligator's. Stay, what's the matter with Carlo? What's he about there? Hark to him how he's giving tongue!"

Carlo was a large Irish setter, whose impatience seemed to resemble that of his master; for until then he had been ranging some distance in front of the cabriolet, but, not being followed so rapidly as he expected, had come swiftly back, and now stood with his feet firmly planted on a mound by the roadside, and his head raised high in the air, awaking the echoes of the forest with a protracted howl.

"Pull up, colonel!" said the doctor.

"That's soon done," returned the colonel. "I never saw a creature take a hint so quickly. Good dog, Carlo! What is it, my fine fellow?"

The travellers both jumped from the cabriolet and approached the spot where the setter was standing. The moonlight enabled them to see a dark object lying across a heap of leaves, and, stooping down with outstretched hands, he who was called "the doctor" pronounced it to be a human body.

"Be still, Carlo," cried the colonel; "what is it you say—a body?"

"Yes, and warm,—help me to raise it—carefully—so, rest his back against the heap—turn his face to the light—ah! quite a lad—wet—and with blood, too!"

"Murdered, doctor?"

"Wounded to a certainty—perhaps killed! No! that moan is a sign of life."

"Poor boy! How came he this way, I wonder! What's to be done?"

"Give me your flask. Keep his head that way. We must make him swallow a few drops. That's well. Now mind him till I get my case. Lucky it's handy—I have it in my great-coat pocket."

He ran to the cabriolet, and soon returned with lint and bandages. They untied the boy's neckcloth, opened his shirt, and with a skilful hand the doctor stanch'd the blood which was still oozing from his wounded breast.

"How far do you call it from here to your house?" asked the doctor?"

"At the next turn of the road, which leads direct to it, rather more than a mile."

"We may manage, I hope, for that distance. He must be kept in a recumbent position. I will hold him in the carriage while you lead the horse."

The doctor got in first, and with little effort, for he was of stalwart frame, the colonel placed the suffering boy in the attitude required. They then slowly moved on, Carlo, who had been an attentive observer of all the proceedings, keeping close to his master's side. Half an hour sufficed to bring them to the pretty village of Maisons-sur-Seine, where the colonel rented a small *château*. He had been expected some time, and the servants were all in attendance, so that no delay took place in carrying Walter indoors, where an immediate and careful examination was made of his wound. It was deep and severe, and caused the doctor to return a grave reply to his friend's anxious inquiry as to the probability of the boy's recovery. If inflammatory action did not supervene—but there is no necessity for us to be technical; indeed, the doctor himself was very little given to use the jargon of his profession, being a straightforward person who always went direct to his purpose. Let it suffice, then, if we say, that though Walter did not die, his condition for some weeks was one of great uncertainty, and that what the Norman's knife failed to accomplish was very nearly brought about by fever.

Pending his recovery, it may be desirable to state who was his hospitable host, and who his medical attendant.

The former was an officer in the British army, who had served in various parts of the globe, always meritoriously, and latterly with the greatest distinction in the Sikh war, where he had obtained his colonel's brevet, and converted his previous companionship of the Bath into the rank of a knight commander, so that those who designated him in full addressed him as Colonel Sir Hercules Kilbryde, K.C.B.

A few wounds of his own, the actual number of which he did not give himself the trouble to reckon, together with the wear and tear of climate, caused him to leave India some eighteen months before the event which has just been described, and after re-establishing his health at one of the German baths, he went to Paris, and being pleased with the environs, settled for the autumn at Maisons. Shortly after his arrival there he heard of the return of his regiment to England, and forthwith sent an invitation to his oldest ally, Dr. Kane, the surgeon of the corps, to come over and pay him a long visit. The invitation was promptly accepted, and thus the two friends were housed once more together. On the day on which Walter was found in the forest, they had been on an excursion to the neighbourhood of Pontoise, and to the fatigue of the much-abused horse it was principally owing that the discovery of the wounded boy was made.

"Isn't it an odd thing, doctor," said Sir Hercules, one evening, while Walter's symptoms were still doubtful—"isn't it odd, I say, that the same sort of thing should affect people so differently? Here now is this boy with only a single prod from a knife, as you tell me, and even you can't prophesy whether he'll live or die; while at Sobraon I got six at least, lance-thrusts all of 'em, besides a couple of bullet-wounds, and divil a bit the worse I found myself all that day, only a little stiff maybe when the night came on and the fun was all over!"

"Everybody, colonel, hasn't your iron frame, and you forget the excitement, which carries a man through anything."

"Bedad, that's true. I don't see what's to stop a fellow so long as he keeps his legs!"

"Unless he happens to lose his head," said the doctor.

"Ah, that indeed!" returned the colonel, gravely. "How do you suppose the poor boy got his hurt?"

"It was from some one a good deal taller than himself, by the direction of the blow; and the arm was a strong one that dealt it."

"No accident, then?"

"I should say, certainly not; a fierce stab, most likely in the heat of passion.

"And not a deliberate robbery?"

"No. If he had been rifled in the way such fellows gener-

ally do their work, they would hardly have left this behind them, which I took off his neck from under his shirt. It is true it had slipped round to his back, but the ribbon was there."

As he spoke, Dr. Kane pulled out the cameo ring which Mary Tunstall had sent to Walter by Dufourmantelle.

"It's a swate face, that," said Sir Hercules, after looking at the head attentively. "I dare say, now, it's one of the goddesses!"

"Not unlikely. Psyche, perhaps. If so, she is well matched with a Cupid—the Cupid of the picture that we saw in the Louvre the other day. He is as slender and well made, and quite as fair."

"Is he a Frenchman, think you?"

"Don't you suppose so?"

"Well—no!" replied Sir Hercules, after a moment's hesitation. "He has an English look."

"I agree with you in that respect."

"And what's more," continued the colonel, "he puts me in mind of somebody I know. Who can it be? For the life of me, now, I can't remember. Ah, I have it. A woman—the loveliest I ever saw—she that married poor Cobham of ours—you don't recollect him, it was a year or two before you joined us. He was drowned with his detachment going out to Canada. It was a runaway match, doctor, a Gretna-green affair, and I was in it."

"Pars magna, I make no doubt."

"I was one of the pa's, if you mane that, for I gave her away. It's curious that I should be reminded of her face at this distance of time; I don't know now whether it's my fancy or not, but the goddess here, Psyche, has a look of her, too! Poor thing," added Sir Hercules, musing, "I wonder how it all ended! I never heard what became of her. Maybe she died!"

"What was her name?"

"Edith Scrope. The last time she signed it was just above my own in the vestry-room of St. Cuthbert's, 'in merry Carlisle.' How old should you say the boy was, doctor?"

"He seems about seventeen."

"Would it be any harrum for me to have another look at him?"

"I am going to his room now. You can come too. But you must not speak, nor make the slightest noise."

Sir Hercules threw away his cigar, took off his slippers, and softly followed Dr. Kane up stairs.

Walter's head was thrown back on his pillow, the flush of fever was on his cheek, and he breathed heavily.

Both watched him in silence.

Presently his lips parted, and he uttered some indistinct words.

Dr. Kane bent down to listen. After a short interval he turned round and whispered to the colonel:

"We were right. He speaks English."

"What did he say?"

"'Rachel, dear!' And then, 'Mary!'"

Sir Hercules again fixed his eyes steadily on the sleeping boy, who spoke again, louder and more plainly than before.

"Let him go!" he cried. "Kill me, but let him go! Rachel! Rachel! They are taking him away!" And he threw his arms out and tossed uneasily. Dr. Kane made a sign to his companion to leave the room. Half an hour afterwards, when he went back to the *salon*, he found Sir Hercules deeply meditating.

He looked up as Dr. Kane entered.

"I can't get this likeness out of my head," he said. "Another strange thing! It's come across me—I'm sure I'm not wrong—Rachel was the name of Mrs. Cobham's maid; and a very pretty girl she was into the bargain!"

"Well," said Dr. Kane, "if he belongs in any way to the people you speak of, we shall find it out by-and-by. I am glad to tell you that I think there is a favourable change; but we must be very, very patient."

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## CHAPTER XL.

### IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPE.

WHILE Walter was being conveyed to an hospitable home, his companion in misfortune was also travelling, but with prospects very far from pleasant. Jules's conductors had

bundled him into the *patache* with as little ceremony as if he had been a mere bale of goods, and it was some time before he recovered his senses sufficiently to remember what had happened. Even when he did collect his scattered faculties, he could only recall the fact of the outrage in the forest; how he became the inmate of the vehicle, which nearly jolted him to death with every movement, wholly exceeded his comprehension. Nor less the purpose for which he had been placed there. He was, however, quite alive to the consciousness that no great good was intended him; and, in the hope of discovering the purpose of the Norman and his follower, lay perfectly still to listen to their conversation. But he gathered little from what they said, every third word being some cant phrase, only understood by themselves; and thus he remained in darkness and discomfort for several hours, sadly revolving over his own condition, and wondering what had happened to Walter, of whose fate he was entirely ignorant. It seemed to Jules as if the day would never come, nor this wearisome journey be brought to a close. At last, however, some streaks of light appeared; and shortly afterwards the *patache* rumbled beneath a gateway, and then stood still.

The Norman now spoke to Jules for the first time, saluting him by the epithet of "God-dem," and ordering him to get out of the carriage. He obeyed as quickly as he could, for his limbs were cramped and stiffened by confinement; and scrambling to the ground, he found himself in a large and very dirty court-yard, enclosed within stables and other out-houses. The morning was wet and raw, adding greatly to the dreariness of the place; and Jules, shivering with cold, hunger, and fatigue, sought shelter under a shed while the horse was taken out of the *patache* and put into a stable. This done, the Norman desired Jules to go with him. Obedient—for there was no remedy—Jules followed out of the yard, a dependency on a solitary *auberge*, on the front of which was painted, in large, upright letters, the usual intimation—"Ici on loge à pied et à cheval." Over the door also appeared an inscription, which informed the wayfarer that the house was called the "Hôtel du Loyal Postillon," and further, that it was "tenu par Rougeventre."

Early as it was, the household were astir, perhaps because



they strictly followed the country custom in France of rising some hours before daylight, perhaps on account of their being in the habit of receiving night-wanderers of the class to which Auguste Mercier belonged. The last supposition is probable enough, for he was encountered by Monsieur Rougeventre himself as a guest whose presence occasioned no surprise, though he stared hard at Jules, apparently wondering what brought him there; but a glance from the Norman checked any curiosity which he might have felt on the subject. Jules also cast an inquiring look on the inn-keeper; but however "loyal" the "postillon" under whose auspices the *auberge* flourished, he saw nothing in Monsieur Rougeventre's countenance expressive either of loyalty or kind feeling, and the project he had formed of proclaiming his wrongs faded away as quickly as it rose. Courapiéd having joined them from the stable, Mercier now ordered breakfast, and when that meal was over he took the landlord apart to talk to him. The result of their conversation was an intimation to Jules to accompany Monsieur Rougeventre and the Norman up stairs, where he was thrust into a miserable bedroom, and told by Mercier that he might sleep, if he liked, for the rest of the day. Screwing his courage up, he demanded by what right he was subjected to this treatment, and was proceeding with his remonstrance when the door was shut in his face, the key turned outside, and he was left alone.

Though not at all wanting in courage, Jules's temperament was of that nature which injury readily provokes to tears; and his first act was to throw himself on the bed and cry for half an hour. He then got up and paced the room to and fro, loudly venting his rage against Mercier and Courapiéd,—and it must be added against Monsieur Rougeventre also,—all three of whom he stigmatized by the appellations of "lâches" and "misérables," to such an extent, that he must have sorely suffered for his imprudence had either of those gentlemen been within hearing. Fortunately for him, they were at that moment carousing below, pledging each other in frequent glasses of the landlord's "sacré chien," that choicest and strongest description of brandy being more to their taste than any other kind.

But if unheard by the objects of his indignation, there

was some one in the house whose ears his voice had reached, and Jules was made aware of it by a gentle tap at his door during one of the intervals of his passionate exclamations.

"Who is there?" he asked in a cross tone, angry and ready to defy the whole world.

"It is only I," was the reply, in small feminine accents.

"And who are you?" inquired Jules, less fiercely than before.

"Come nearer the door and I will tell you. I must speak very low, for your room is close to the staircase. Can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I am Lucine; my father keeps the *auberge*; it was I who poured out your coffee at breakfast."

"I remember you—you are a very pretty girl."

"Nonsense."

"But it is true."

"Never mind about that! What have you been brought here for, and why are you shut up?"

"I know no more than you do. It is a wicked shame; but I shall denounce the authors of it to justice!"

"To do that you must get away first."

Jules seemed to think so, and remained silent.

"Listen," resumed Lucine. "I happened to be near your door"—she did not say she had crept up stairs to peep through the keyhole—"and heard you crying. I thought it such a pity! I will help you to get away if you are willing."

"Willing! Mon Dieu! Certainly. But how? Tell me, Lucine! I shall love you for ever!"

"Have you been to your window yet?"

"No! But I shall do so. Ah!" he exclaimed, returning to the door, "it looks out upon that detestable court-yard. It is very far from the ground. My neck would be broken were I to jump."

"I think so too," replied Lucine, "but yet it is not impossible for you to escape that way. Can you ride? Are you afraid to mount a horse?"

"I am afraid of nothing," said Jules, proudly.

"In that case," answered Lucine, "count on my assist-

ance. The people who came with you—I believe one of them to be a very bad man—are drinking with my father. It still rains hard, and no one is about the house; I will slip out to the stable and get a horse ready. Then, if I am able, I will raise a ladder to the window—there is a long one in the yard—and you have only to descend.”

“Ah, but you will hurt yourself with that ladder. No, dearest Lucine, do not make the attempt. Rather will I remain for ever here!”

“We shall see—we shall see. Adieu,—for a little while!”

“Adieu!”

Noiselessly she withdrew from the door; but, to the prisoner’s surprise, in a few moments he heard her voice again.

“I forgot one thing. I want to know your name.”

“My name is Jules Vermeil. My father is the principal confectioner of Rouen, and a member of the Legion of Honour. I am a student of the Royal College of Charlemagne in Paris; my mother——”

“That will do,” said Lucine, and this time she took her departure.

The dirty court-yard had now some attraction for Jules, and he hurried to the window to watch the proceedings of Lucine. As she passed through the arch she looked up and smiled, waving her hand as a signal to Jules not to show himself too openly. It was broad daylight, his eyes were quick, and he saw that he had not merely been paying a compliment when he told her that she was pretty; she seemed about the same age as himself, and being a susceptible young gentleman, with no other predilection—not even the *souvenir* of Séraphine—he straightway fell in love.

While the first throes of his new passion were agitating his bosom, Lucine was busy in the court-yard preparing the means for his escape. The labour of placing the ladder was less than she had anticipated, for it was already standing against an open hayloft, and she had only to turn it over and over till it reached the gable-end of the house, and when near enough to the window Jules was able to fix it in position: Lucine then kept it steady below, and as quickly as might be, the prisoner stood beside his deliverer. The

ardent youth would have embraced her on the spot; but this demonstration Lucine avoided,—either on account of the rain, or, it might be, the publicity of the act—and, whispering “*Vite! vite!*” ran away to the stable. Thither Jules followed in all haste, and when he emerged, some ten minutes afterwards, he bestrode a bare-backed steed, more remarkable for bone than blood, and very liberally endowed in the articles of mane and tail. It may seem to the unreflecting reader that to consume ten minutes in mounting a horse, when a person is in a hurry to escape, is wasting a great deal of time, but let that reader reassure himself—the time was not wasted. Lucine and Jules had each several things to say. The place where the *auberge* stood was on the skirts of the forest of Bizy, and it was necessary for Lucine to explain clearly the road Jules ought to take in order to strike the railway at Vernon, the nearest station. This, after one or two interruptions of thankfulness on the part of Jules, which made Lucine look a little rosier, was at last satisfactorily accomplished; but when the railway was mentioned there arose a difficulty. The object of Jules was to get to Rouen as fast as he could; but, unluckily, he did not possess a single *sou*, his trifle of pocket-money having been expended at the fair, the day before, in the purchase of a small gold heart and cross, which he intended for his sister Cécile—unless, indeed, some other fair one intercepted the present. He was obliged, therefore, to expose his penniless condition to Lucine, and he did so with hesitation as well as doubt, not liking to make the revelation, nor expecting any good to come of it. His doubt was, however, speedily removed, for Lucine, with a smiling face, informed him that, *Dieu merci!* she was the owner of a couple of five-franc pieces, and the money, luckily, was in her pocket: she gave it him with all her heart. Jules would not hear of such a thing; it must be a loan, not a gift; he would restore it the moment he reached Rouen, and leave a pledge of his sincerity—here he took out the little heart and cross—behind him. No!—he did not mean a pledge—she must wear that for his sake—not for a few days only, but for ever! Ah, might he hope—must I explain further why ten minutes were consumed by Jules in clambering to his horse’s back?

At the archway, Lucine peeped out, and, the coast being

clear, the lovers—how short a time it takes to convert strangers into lovers!—bade each other again farewell. As it was not necessary for Jules to pass in front of the *auberge*, his road lying in a contrary direction, he did not start at a gallop, but walked his horse slowly away, turning often to look at Lucine; but when the angle of the building hid her from his sight, he shook the bridle of his *destrier*, and rode off at a good pace towards Vernon, while Lucine, with a flushed cheek and quickened breath, stole back to her father's roof.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE TABLES TURNED.

As nothing ever happens in the way that mortals expect, so the programme of Lucine was disturbed by an unforeseen occurrence. It had been arranged that on the arrival of Jules Vermeil at Vernon, he was to seek out a certain inn, the position of which was clearly described, and there give up his horse to the *garçon d'écurie*, to be sent back in the course of the day to the Hôtel du Loyal Postillon. Having made restitution of the steed, he was then to proceed to the station, and take the first train to Rouen. A letter to Lucine, announcing his safe arrival at home, was to be the third act of the eventful drama.

The obstacle to the successful issue of this programme arose out of the fact that Jules, who possessed many accomplishments, knew nothing of the science of equitation. We have seen how he set out on his journey; and, as long as the pace was moderate, he managed tolerably well, but when his horse, which was rather fresh, increased its speed, his difficulties began: as the canter became a gallop the rider's heart (that heart which he had just disposed of) flew into his mouth, and his presence of mind departed: dropping the rein, he seized the mane, and the beast, having his head free, and knowing well the sort of rider he had to deal with, did just what he liked, till Jules could stand it no longer, and, losing his seat altogether, was pitched head foremost into a muddy ditch, where he lay for some moments half stunned, while the author of his mischance, freed from

all encumbrance, wheeled sharply round and galloped back towards his stable.

Recovering from his fall, and finding that no bones were broken, Jules now began to consider what was best for him to do. The spot where the accident occurred was something more than half way to Vernon, and he resolved to push on a-foot, and reach that town as quickly as he could: he had time to do so, he hoped, before the tell-tale horse revealed his flight. Once at Vernon, he fancied himself safe. He accordingly walked briskly on, and in the course of an hour arrived at a small village, where, on inquiry, he found he was only a league from his place of destination. In less than another hour he came within sight of the town; but before he proceeded to the railway station he stepped into a little *cabaret* to refresh himself with a glass of wine. The fatigue of the previous night, the wet and dirt through which he had tramped, and the rents in his clothes occasioned by his tumble, had rendered his personal appearance anything but respectable, and the owner of the *cabaret* declined to supply the required refreshment until he saw the colour of the traveller's money. With a gesture of indignation, Jules thrust his hand into his waistcoat pocket for one of the five-franc pieces which Lucine had given him, but, to his utter amazement, not a vestige of a coin was visible. He felt in every other pocket, but with no greater success, and at last was compelled to admit that he had nothing about him. On this, the *cabaretier*, observing with a sneer that he saw how it was, bade him try the trick on somebody else, and very quietly put back his bottle on the shelf, while, burning with shame and resentment, Jules turned away from the inhospitable door.

What was to be done now? It was plain that the money had been jerked out of his pocket during that infernal gallop, or else he had lost it when he fell into the ditch. In either case it was irrecoverable, for, even if he knew where to look, it was impossible for him to go back to seek it. To do so would be to expose himself to the risk—almost the certainty—of meeting with the fellows from whom he was escaping, as there could be little doubt that when his evasion was discovered—which might already be the case—his former captors would guess the route he had taken, and follow in hot pursuit. He must leave his money behind,

then ;—but how get on without it ? That, however, was only a secondary consideration. He wanted protection more than money. He would claim it at the hands of justice, as he had already threatened when in colloquy with Lucine.

To find out where "justice" resided was now his object. The streets of Vernon were narrow and crooked, offering no unapt resemblance to The Law's approaches ; and painfully he hobbled through them with only one shoe to his foot, the other having been lost in the ditch. At last he reached the market-place, the focus of all movement in every French country town, and was not long in discovering the Mairie, the building proclaiming itself not only by an inscription in gold letters and a tricoloured flag which waved above the portico, but by a group of *gendarmes* who were assembled before it.

A *gendarme*, generally speaking, is not a very accessible personage, there is so much cocked hat and boots about him, and the sabre which he trails upon the pavement is in itself so formidable ; moreover, the recollections of Jules with regard to the class were disturbed by disagreeable associations ; but to counterbalance these things, there was the sense of his own importance, which he very rarely lost sight of, and the necessities of the case. Approaching the group, therefore, Jules addressed himself to the one who appeared to scowl the least, though there was not much difference between them in that respect, and requested to be presented to the Mayor of Vernon.

"Plaît-il ?" said the man, opening his eyes very wide, as if he had not heard aright.

On the repetition of the request, the *gendarme* looked at Jules steadfastly, and burst out laughing.

"What does he want ?" asked one of the others, taking his pipe from his mouth and drawing nearer.

"*Le drôle !*" replied the first—"he desires to make the acquaintance of Monsieur le Maire !"

"He may have good reason for wishing to do so," observed the interlocutor, ironically. Then, turning to Jules, he said, "What henroost have you been robbing ?"

An accusation of murder, with the certainty of conviction, would have affected Jules less than did this scornful question. His eyes flashed fire on the *gendarme* as he replied,

"When people say 'six feet of stupidity,' they always mean a *gendarme*. Do I look like a robber of henroosts?"

"As like," answered the *gendarme*, nettled at being called stupid—"as like as one thief is to another."

"If I resembled a thief," returned Jules, "as nearly as you resemble a jackass, the judge's decision would not be difficult." This remark created a laugh at the expense of the second *gendarme*, and brought forward a third person, who had been standing aloof reading a paper, and who now inquired what was the matter?

"Mon brigadier," said the *gendarme* whom the retorts of Jules had irritated, "je crois qu'il y a quelqu'un ici qui désire manger le morceau." (I think, brigadier, that some one here wants to make a confession.)

"If you command here, monsieur," said Jules, speaking to the new comer, "I beg to be heard. I ask it in the interests of justice."

"Certainly," replied the brigadier; "what have you to say?"

"I have just escaped from the hands of assassins, monsieur. I demand that they be pursued and arrested."

"This is serious," said the sub-officer; "come with me."

He led the way into the mayor's office, and that functionary being communicated with, presently made his appearance. Jules was forthwith submitted to interrogation in the usual manner—that is to say, as if he who made the accusation were himself the criminal—a peculiarity in the mode of administering the law which always obtains in France, and sometimes elsewhere. The *procès-verbal* drawn up, and a *prise-de-corps* signed, immediate steps were taken for verifying the former and putting the latter into execution. The first part of the business was the removal of Jules to prison until he could be confronted with the persons whom he had accused,—the second, the despatch of three mounted *gendarmes* in search of them.

Jules, who had never calculated on passing the night in gaol, inveighed loudly, but in vain, against this decree, and while he is chewing the cud of fancies more bitter than sweet, we will return to the *auberge*.

Gentlemen of the profession on which Monsieur Auguste Mercier conferred so much *éclat* rarely allow their talents to remain unemployed if the slightest opportunity offers for turn-



ing them to account, and as the rain continued to pour, precluding all possibility of stirring abroad, even had he been so minded, he turned his thoughts towards the best mode of occupying his time until dinner was ready. Jean Courapied, for a stipulated sum, half of which he received in Paris, had agreed to bear an equal part with Mercier in the abduction of the English boy, whom they intended to convey to Havre, there to await the arrival of Matthew Yates from England. The *roulant* was consequently somewhat flush of cash, and from the burden of that cash Mercier proposed to relieve him. He accordingly suggested play, and to escape from *ennui*, a malady with which even rogues are occasionally visited, Courapied consented to the proposition.

What should it be? *La Robignole* (a game played with walnut-shells and a small bit of cork, like the pea and thimble)? *La Jarnaffe* (Prick the Garter)? No. The *roulant* had no fancy for sleight of hand: he rather preferred dominoes, at which game he fancied himself particularly strong. Unfortunately, none were to be found—so at least Monsieur Rougeventre said, replying to Mercier's look when asked for them—and cards were necessarily substituted. All Frenchmen, of whatever class—unless they happen to be men of science, or grocers,—play games of chance with skill; but then there are degrees of skill, and though Courapied was no tyro, he had to do with one who was *passé maître*, not in skill merely, but in that peculiar exercise of ability which gains for him who employs it the unenviable appellation of *frimousse* (*Anglicè*, a cheat). Mercier's great dexterity consisted in his being able to *faire le pont* (bend a card) so slightly as to be almost imperceptible, and in cutting for the king at *ecarté*, it may be imagined what was his advantage. Courapied lost, of course, and kept losing—with now and then a permitted amount of luck,—and as they played *rubis sur pieux* (for ready money) he was soon in a fair way of being completely cleaned out. This consummation had nearly arrived, when Monsieur Rougeventre, who had been watching the game, happening to look up, uttered a cry of surprise, and hastily left the room. In a few minutes he returned, wellnigh out of breath, and in a state of great excitement.

"Diable!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak; "I hear something has happened!"

"What do you mean?" asked Mercier and Courapied both together.

"I ran out," he said, "because I saw my black horse standing in the middle of the road. He was ready bridled, and covered with mud and foam, as if he had been galloping fast. The courtyard gate was closed. I had to open it before I could drive him in. What did I see when I got there? A ladder standing at the open window of the room where we put the boy. Depend upon it he has somehow given you the slip!"

Down went the cards, before Courapied's last *franc* was utterly gone, and with a tremendous oath the Norman bounded up stairs, followed by the other two. Without waiting for the key, Mercier dashed his whole weight against the door and staggered into the room. It was empty! The Norman seized the landlord by the throat. "This is some trick of yours!" he cried. "Where is the boy?"

Extricating himself from Mercier's grasp, Monsieur Rouge-ventre protested that he knew no more than he had already told him; but the Norman would not be convinced, and a fierce altercation arose between them. While it was at its height, Courapied suddenly called out: "*V' là les grippe-Jésus! Desmaraillons!*" (Here are the *gendarmes*! Let us be off!)

Mercier cast his eyes towards the window, and perceived two of the party who had been sent from Vernon approaching the front of the *auberge*. "The back-way! the back-way!" he shouted. "Run to the wood, Roulant!"

He reached the foot of the stairs in a moment, and opened the back door, Courapied close at his heels; but before he could set his foot outside he was confronted by the third *gendarme*. Mercier drew a pistol from his breast, levelled it at his opponent, and pulled the trigger. The weapon missed fire. At the same instant down came the *gendarme's* sabre with a heavy sweep, and Mercier, whose right arm was half cut through, dropped on the ground. This was enough for Courapied, whose courage was not of a high order: he fell on his knees and begged for mercy. By this time the two other *gendarmes* had entered the *auberge*. The prisoners were fettered together and locked in a cellar until the officers of justice had refreshed themselves after their journey.

To propitiate them as much as possible, Monsieur Rouge-ventre served up the identical dinner which had been got

ready for the Norman and his companion—and as those worthies had ordered the best the house could produce, the *gendarmes*—fastidious people when they dined at their own expense—declared themselves very well satisfied. It was only in the nature of things that Monsieur Rougeventre should express himself greatly horrified at finding that those whom he had harboured were persons of bad character : he had naturally supposed the parties were simple travellers—a gentleman and his son, attended by a servant. “To think of criminality in such a category ! *Mon Dieu !*”

“Of course,” observed the principal *gendarme*, with a lurking smile—“of course, that was your belief as an honest man ! Nevertheless, Monsieur Rougeventre, you must be kind enough to come over to Vernon to-morrow morning, to depose to the circumstances under which these men arrived at your house. The carriage in which they travelled will be necessary amongst the *pièces de conviction*.”

“I will drive it myself,” said Monsieur Rougeventre, cheerfully ; “also the horse of those *scélérats*.”

Auguste Mercier and Jean Courapiéd occupied separate cells that night on either side of the one in which Jules Vermeil was confined, and the impartiality of justice was further exemplified in the identical character of the several prison arrangements. In the moral position of the prisoners there was, however, a little difference. Fatigue, if not innocence, made Jules sleep soundly ; Mercier’s wound, and the rage he felt at losing his prize, rendered him wakeful enough ; and Courapiéd passed the night in revolving the best method of getting out of the scrape into which the Norman had led him.

The examination on the following day presented some features which were not altogether without interest.

The statement made by Jules respecting his own abduction was fully corroborated by the unreluctant testimony of Monsieur Rougeventre, who, fearing to be compromised, incriminated his associates after the most approved fashion. Nor was this friendly feeling confined to the host of the Loyal Postilion ; it extended to Jean Courapiéd, who, when it came to his turn to be examined, volunteered evidence against the Norman for which the court was by no means prepared. We must not search too narrowly into his motives, but I believe that the real cause of the *roulant’s*

conduct arose from his conviction that Mercier had cheated him the day before: a night's consideration of the subject had certainly satisfied Jean Courapied that his money had not been fairly lost. There might have been another reason also—the desire to save himself: but, in any case, he made a clean breast of it, and revealed the fact that Mercier had stabbed Walter in the forest of Saint-Germain, leaving him there for dead; in support of his assertion he produced the purse and handkerchief which, he said, the Norman had given him to keep.

On hearing this story, and beholding the objects which had belonged to Walter, Jules, who loved him like a brother, burst into an agony of grief, and was removed fainting from the court—the proceedings of which were suspended till he was well enough to reappear. This did not take place for several days, and, in the interim, he was nursed at the house of the mayor, who had discovered that his friends were of high respectability in Rouen. Another discovery was also made before Mercier and Courapied were finally committed for trial; the Norman found out that all the trouble he had taken to secure his prisoner had been literally thrown away. Deceived by the words which Jules was in the habit of using, he had taken it for granted that he who said “Goddem” could not possibly be other than English. It might, however, have been some satisfaction to one of his fierce nature to think that, after all, he had killed the boy who was the cause of his present trouble.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE TRACK RECOVERED.

THE week went by which Monsieur Perrotin had promised to wait, but no tidings came to him of either Rachel or Walter. In their stead, however, appeared Monsieur Vermeil, who brought happiness to his own household in the person of Jules, whom he had discovered at Vernon; not by his own sagacity, but through a letter from the mayor of that place, when the discriminating functionary came to know to whom Jules belonged. It was not, of course, unadulterated happiness, for Walter was dear to them all, and absence had not yet effaced his memory from

the mind of the susceptible Cécile, who shed as many tears when her brother came back without him as had fallen from her bright eyes when they took their departure together. Whether or not she became comforted, after the old Ephesian fashion, may, perhaps, be ascertained hereafter. In the mean time this history occupies itself with the more serious purpose of Monsieur Perrotin.

While a mystery still hung over Walter's fate, which even the police of Paris had not yet been able to unravel, the teacher of languages felt that he could render little service in attempting to perform their office. He was distracted also by Rachel's silence, and therefore determined to carry out his original intention of following her to England without any further delay. His friend Vermeil promised faithfully to communicate whatever might transpire having relation to Walter; and once more Monsieur Perrotin committed himself to the mercy of the winds and waves. Of the inconvenience—to speak mildly—which they caused him, Monsieur Perrotin heeded little: the Past and the Future so completely filled his thoughts, that there was no room in them for the Present. On his first visit to England he had accidentally become acquainted with Walter's father, and since that day the fortunes of the son had been entirely identified with his own: a mere casual encounter, a kind word by chance, had given colour to the events of a whole life! But why wonder at this, Monsieur Perrotin? It is the abiding law of our existence. We prepare many things *de longue main*, and think ourselves wise when they happen to come to pass; but of the wisdom which ordains that unprepared things shall rule our destiny we think very little, though in that concealment lies the principle of all our joys or sorrows.

It was, of course, to "Piccadilly's White Bear"—as Monsieur Perrotin always called his friend's hotel—that the teacher of languages proceeded immediately he arrived in London. "To think of seein' you, of all people!" exclaimed Mr. William Partridge, before the other could open his lips. "What! come to look after your pretty wife? Afraid somebody's run away with her, I dussay! That's about it, musseer, ain't it? Hallo, though, you've somethin' the matter! What's gone wrong, musseer? I hope no harm's happened to none of the family!"

"Ah, my good friend Williamms," replied Monsieur Perrotin, sadly, "I am in a great many troubles."

"Has money anythin' to do with 'em?" asked Mr. Partridge; if so, never let that worrit you!"

Monsieur Perrotin squeezed his friend's hand as he reassured him on this point. He then entered into the details of his melancholy narrative, with a lingering hope, towards its close, that Mr. Partridge might be able to give him some later news of his wife; but the host of the White Bear shook his head. "Mrs. P. and me," he said, "was a wonderin' to ourselves, only yesterday, how it was that we'd never had no news of madam since she left London, though she kindly promised to write, and would have done it, I'm sure, if not in someways pervented."

"For you must know, musseer," chimed in Mrs. Partridge, "that the object of her journey is no secret to us, and a more painfuller story was never told. I've cried over it in this very parlour till I wasn't fit to show myself at the bar when wanted."

"Alas! madame!" said Monsieur Perrotin, "what the namesake of your good husband, the divine Williamms, observe, is only too true: 'Never can we know when is the worst!' Always I am fearing some still more bad accident shall arrive!"

"Come, come!" said Mr. Partridge, cheerily, "don't look down, musseer. You know what the song says: 'There's a good time comin','—for everybody, in my opinion. We oughtn't for to go and make ourselves miserable as long as we *don't* know that the worst as can be ain't happened."

"But the poor stabbed boy, and this of my wife's unexplained silence."

"Look here, musseer," returned Mr. Partridge; "I've been a turning over all you've said in my mind, and as far as the young gentleman is concerned, I don't believe things is quite so bad as you fancy. The two villains which is took up—leastways one of 'em—owns to having stuck Master Walter, and left him behind in that there forest of what's-his-name, when they carried off the young French chap. Now you say the Johnnydarms, which answers, I suppose, to The Force over here, can't find no traces of the body. Don't it stand to reason, then, that he can't be dead; for if he was, there he would have laid till they found

him. No! Take my word for it, he'll turn up again! Then about madam. All I'm afraid of in that quarter is, that she may have took a fever, or a illness of some sort, and so have incapacitated herself from writing."

"I fear that," said Monsieur Perrotin, in a husky voice. "To be ill—dying, perhaps! Ah, that is terrible!"

"There you are, musseer, jumpin' off the rails again. Every illness—supposing madam *is* ill, which is quite conjectory—ain't mortal. Why, Mrs. P. can tell you herself what she went through with the titus—how her very tongue turned as black as a parrit's—they even laid her out, and yet there she is a sitting on her chair as healthy as you are yourself; I'm sure, to look at her, you'd never think she'd had so much as a pain in her little finger!"

This picture of a possible event was not very consolatory to Monsieur Perrotin, modified as its shadows were by the chance of recovery, and he replied: "But, whether or not, so it is my desire, equally as my duty, to pursue my poor wife. Never shall I have rest till I bring her at me!" Mr. Partridge admitted that this anxiety was only reasonable.

"And I'll tell you what," he added, "if you've no objection to my company, I'll go down into Yorkshire with you. It ain't every one in them parts as could make out all you say, musseer, and your chance of making them out would be as bad, or perhaps worse: now, I'm not a scholar, though I often think I might have been if I'd kep' up the French you used to teach me, but I've an English tongue in my head and English ears on to it, and a man as has had five-and-twenty years' experience in my line, waiter and master, ain't easily put down; so, as I said before, musseer, you must take me along with you!"

This proposal was too advantageous to be refused, and on the evening of the following day, Monsieur Perrotin and his friend put up at the Briggate Inn, at Barnard Castle, where Rachel herself had stopped. Being of an eminently social disposition, Mr. Partridge very soon made friends with the landlady and her handsome daughter, and gathered from them all they knew about her whom they called "t' strange lady." But all the information they were able to give stopped short at a point which left matters almost as bad as Monsieur Perrotin had feared—the unaccountable disappearance of Rachel rendering her fate to the full as myste-

of the conversation, however, the scene in the dark, when Rachel discovered Matthew Yates, was described by Phillis, and at the mention of the keeper's name a light broke in on Monsieur Perrotin. To whom but to that man could he ascribe the evil, whatever it really was, that had befallen his wife? He too well remembered her terror, and the threats which Yates had uttered in his own hearing, not to apprehend danger from such a ruffian, if opportunity favoured his designs. While he was earnestly explaining his ideas to Mr. Partridge, before they separated for the night, a loud noise was heard outside, as of people quarrelling, and presently the inn door flew open, and a man fell staggering backwards on the floor, closely followed by another, who had apparently given the first a knock-down blow. Phillis jumped up, screaming. "What's o' thee, Geordy," she cried, recognising her lover in the last comer. "Art fighting, lad?"

"No, lass," replied Geordy Walker, "not that. I was coming up here fro' t' market, and this drunken chap set on me all of a sudden, so just to save mysel' I gave him a topper."

"Put him out again into t' street, lad," said Phillis's mother. Geordy stooped to lift the fallen man, but it was no easy task, for he was insensible, as well from drink as from the effects of the blow he had received; and in trying to raise him, Phillis, who kept close to her lover, recognised the features of the countryman, Loll, who was a frequent hanger-on at the inn.

"Stay, Geordy," she said, "don't put him out that gate. I'm thinking," she added, turning to Monsieur Perrotin, "this chap can tell summut about him you were talking on. The last time yon fellow was here I saw them in company." With the assistance of Mr. Partridge, Geordy Walker contrived to place the drunken man in a chair, and a copious sprinkling of vinegar brought him at last to his senses. "More—yall!" he stuttered; "Ise—brass—plenty—to pay for't. Be quick—can't you!"

"Thou'st had yall aneugh," said Phillis; "but where hast gotten t' brass thou talks about?"

"Where!" replied Loll, opening his eyes as wide as he could, and staring dreamily—"where there's more o't—when I want it. I'll fight thee for five pund"—this was addressed to his late antagonist—"and Maaster Wood—shall put down—my stake. Wilt do't, l-l-lad? Ise ready."



"Who's o' Maaster Wood?" asked Geordy, taking no notice of the challenge.

"A gen'l'man," returned Loll, "better than ony o' you. Five pund!—yes, he gave me five pund—for driving him twenty mile!"

"Ah," said Mr. Partridge, "how long ago was that, my fine fellow?" Loll looked up at the new speaker and grinned. "Thou wants to know? Well, then, Ise not gaun to tell."

"But suppose I gave you another five pounds for telling! and a pot of famous ale?" Mr. Partridge had touched the key-note. "T' yall," said the drunkard; "coom then." The liquor seemed to steady the fellow: as soon as he had drained the mug, he held out his huge hand: "Gie t' brass!"

"Presently," said Mr. Partridge; and then repeated his former question.

"Can't say how long syne," answered Loll; "Ise been howkin' round t' country a gay while—last week, or t' week afore that—or some time. Twenty mile at night for five pund! I'll lay onybody it's not twenty mile fro' Mickleton-hill to t' Darlington station."

"What dost mean by Mickleton-hill, lad?" asked Geordy Walker.

"Where she got into t' chaise wi' Maaster Wood."

"You hear that!" said Mr. Partridge, turning to Monsieur Perrotin.

"Ah, ma pauvre femme!" exclaimed the excited Frenchman, who had been listening eagerly to what was going on, "le scélérat l'a enlevée. Dis donc, misérable, qu'est-elle devenue?" As may be imagined, this question was entirely thrown away: even the host of the White Bear was unable to translate it. Though boiling over with rage, Monsieur Perrotin saw he must speak English if he wished to be understood in Yorkshire.

"Rogue of a driver!" he cried, menacing Loll with his clenched fists, "what has been done to my wife?"

The unknown language first, and Monsieur Perrotin's violence afterwards, roused up the sottish Loll to a clearer knowledge of his situation. He saw he had been talking too much in his cups. "I know nowt about your wife," he said.

"Perhaps not," interposed Mr. Partridge, "but you know something of the lady that was carried off by this Mr. Wood, as you call him." Loll stared stupidly at the host

of the White Bear, wondering where he could have got his information. "Come, my lad," said Mr. Partridge, "you had better make a clean breast of it at once. Remember the five pounds!"

"Where be they?" asked Loll.

"In my pocket, now," returned Mr. Partridge; "in yours by-and-by, if you tell the whole truth."

Loll's mind was in a very hazy state: a fancy that it would be dangerous to betray such a man as Matthew Yates strove with his desire to take the money; but, after a short struggle, avarice prevailed over fear, and he told the whole story: how, at Yates's instigation, he had followed Rachel to her place of refuge at Holwick; how Yates had met him at Bowes with a carriage and horses, which he had agreed to drive; how Rachel had been met with on their way to the cottage where they expected to find her; and how she had been inveigled into the carriage and finally carried off to Darlington, at which place his story ended: he knew nothing more, he said, about the matter. Questioned as to what was done with the carriage and horses, he replied that they had been left at the Bell Inn, at Darlington, where he had been sent about his business, with more money in his pocket than he had ever had before. And now for the five pounds! Monsieur Perrotin was for giving the money directly, but his friend had not been the intimate of Detective Wormwood for nothing.

"He shall have it," he said, "when he has made a deposition of the facts which he has stated before a magistrate. I suppose," he said to Geordy Walker, "you can tell us who to go to in the morning?"

While Loll's confession was being wrung from him, Phillis's lover had more than once evinced a desire to break in upon it with some remarks of his own, and to Mr. Partridge's question he replied that he had been wanting to tell him that Mr. Dalton, the parson at Romaldskirk, and the magistrate there, knew something of the circumstances already, and had offered a reward for further information.

"Well, my lad," said Mr. Partridge, addressing Loll, "I will keep my word; but as the money would be safer with me than you for the present, I shall keep it till to-morrow. Now take another glass of ale, and go to bed."

The fellow grumbled, but he had sense enough to see

that he was in a minority, so he swallowed another pint of beer, and, conducted by Geordy, allowed himself to be deposited in a hay-loft. With the ladder staircase removed, and mastered by heavy sleep, there was no fear of his changing his lodging during the night.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

MR. DALTON was, according to his daily custom, at work upon the never-ending county history, when Crossthwaite, who played many parts in his household, came to tell him that he was wanted in his magisterial capacity. Proceeding to the room which did duty for a court of justice, Mr. Dalton found assembled there Monsieur Perrotin, Mr. Partridge, and Geordy Walker, with Loll, a conditional prisoner or witness, as events might determine. All were strangers to him except Geordy, and of him Mr. Dalton asked the reason of their appearance. It was soon told: the clue to the abduction of the person in whom he had taken so much interest was discovered. There is no necessity for recapitulating the facts, with which the reader is acquainted. Loll's statement was sworn to, and Mr. Dalton immediately granted a warrant for the apprehension of Matthew Yates. To find him, however, was the difficulty, and when the formal business was over, and Geordy and Loll had been dismissed—the latter in custody, for the want of security for his reappearance,—Mr. Dalton expressed to Monsieur Perrotin and his friend, who remained, the doubts he entertained of the keeper's speedy capture. "It is quite evident," he said, "that this man has left Yorkshire; in all probability he has gone to London; and amidst the multitudes there, the chance of discovering him is, I fear, a poor one." Mr. Partridge smiled at the worthy clergyman's remark, but said nothing. Monsieur Perrotin, however, was eager to speak.

"Sir," he said to Mr. Dalton, "I learn that my dear wife was seen by you before her unhappy disappearance. She was then in good health?"

"Apparently quite well," answered Mr. Dalton: "but, I

had reference to a child, and was connected, as I inferred, with her former position in a family of distinction in this part of the country."

"With the family of Madame Scrop," observed Monsieur Perrotin.

"Yes," returned Mr. Dalton. "And what that trouble was, she promised to declare to myself and Lady Tunstall, the youngest daughter of Mrs. Scrope."

"In my wife's absence," said Monsieur Perrotin, with a sigh, "I can relate what she would have said. But I should also wish to see that *miladi*."

"I am afraid your wish cannot be gratified at present," said Mr. Dalton; "Lady Tunstall is no longer in this neighbourhood, nor, I believe, in England."

Monsieur Perrotin's countenance fell.

"Always are we to be disappointed. Fate is for ever against that dear boy! Where shall *miladi* be gone, sir?"

"To Paris, as I understood. Her husband, Sir James, took her away, with her daughter, last week."

"In such a case, said Monsieur Perrotin, "my dear Rachel's wish can in part only be accomplished; but if you will do me the honour to listen, I shall tell to you all that I know. I can speak before my friend here, since he was acquainted already of this history."

With deep and serious attention Mr. Dalton gave ear to Monsieur Perrotin's narrative. He was greatly affected by it, and when the speaker—after several interruptions—had finished, he said: "The interest I take in all that concerns Mrs. Scrope's family has always been paramount over every other feeling—it is of little consequence, now, to say why: I thought that interest could not have been increased; but you, Monsieur Perrotin, have made me think differently. Nor will you be surprised when I say that the young officer of whom you have spoken, the father of the poor boy whom you have so much befriended, was the son of an old and valued friend of my own. Captain Cobham and myself were, in fact, not very distantly related; I remember Walter, as a fine boy of twelve or thirteen years old, before he was sent to the military college; after that time I never saw him; but I well recollect—I was in Ireland when it occurred—the sad shipwreck in which he lost his life. Ah, how little I imagined that in lamenting his death I mourned for the

husband of Edith Scrope! Strange, strange indeed, are the links by which our affections are united!"

Mr. Dalton rose and paced the room, absorbed in thought. After a few turns he resumed his seat, and addressing Monsieur Perrotin, said:—

"You know, from your own experience, the character of Mrs. Scrope. Inflexible in all her resolves, and proud as she is determined, her nature is not one to yield to ordinary representations. I do not, therefore, advise *you* to make an appeal, I will not say to her sympathies—who knows, alas! whether she may not have survived them all?—but to her sense of right, for I fear that her pride would cause her to reject it; but what you, monsieur, cannot do, I will not shrink—when a fitting time arrives—from undertaking myself. In the mean while, a good deal remains to be done. Your wife's present abode must be discovered, and her release effected; Yates must, if possible, be arrested; and the most important thing of all for accomplishing our views—they are mine, now, as well as yours—is the restoration to his mother of the poor wounded boy; for as your friend here observed while you were speaking, I agree with him in thinking that young Walter is not dead. You have friends in Paris you say?"

"Oh yes; besides Monsieur Clovis and his wife, there are certainly some others."

"I, too, have a friend in the neighbourhood of Paris, an active, energetic man, who will leave nothing undone that can assist our object. Warm-hearted Hercules Kilbryde never yet spared himself when there was a prospect of doing good to another."

"Who have you say, sir?" asked Monsieur Perrotin.

Mr. Dalton repeated the name of his friend.

"I was know him once for a little time, oh, but very well! He was witness to the marriage of Mademoiselle Scrop. I could not remember of his name till you mention it. Oh, yes, Hercule Kilbryde! *C'est bien ça. Il est un brave garçon!*"

"So far, so good," said Mr. Partridge, rubbing his hands. "Now let me say a word, sir, about the other part of this here affair. You observe—and I make no doubt you're correct—that the fellow who carried off Madam Perrytin is not to be had in Yorkshire, and most probably is gone to London. I am agreeable to the same view; but when you

remark—you'll excuse me, sir, the liberty I'm takin'—when you remark that a party as hides hisself in London ain't to be got at nohow, you forget—I ask your pardon once more—but you *really do* forget that the metropolitan force has officers which they call them detectives—gentlemen as will find out anything they've a mind to. Now the first and foremost of the lot is my particular, I may say my very particular friend, John Wormwood, and if you'll allow me, sir, to place the matter in his hands as soon as we get back to town, I don't mind jepperdin'—that is to say, hazzerdizin'—an opinion that in less than a month John Wormwood's gripe will be on Matthew Yate's shoulder!"

"I do not see," said Mr. Dalton, after reflecting for a moment, "that any better plan can be adopted than the one you recommend."

"In course not, sir," returned Mr. Partridge. "They couldn't do no more at head-quarters than employ their best man; but it makes all the difference, even with detectives—which they are mortal, sir, like all of us, and has their partialities,—whether they does a thing to order or of their own free will, more especially when called upon to oblige—and not speakin' of no reward, which I'm aware it's handsom'."

"I need not hesitate to assure you," said Mr. Dalton, in reply to Mr. Partridge's allusion, "that the reward will be proportionate to the service rendered. The sum already inserted in this handbill which I have had printed is not to be considered the limit. Use your own discretion, therefore, Mr. Partridge, and rely upon it Lady Tunstall will be satisfied." The interview with Mr. Dalton did not absolutely end here, for the good clergyman insisted that Monsieur Perrotin and Mr. Partridge should not leave Romaldskirk without sharing in the hospitality which the rectory afforded. That evening, however, they took their leave, and returned by the night-train to London.

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## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE MIST CLEARING AWAY.

AUTUMN glided away while Walter was lying on a sick-bed, and by the time he became convalescent winter had

set in. During the interval many things had happened to affect his fortunes, which will appear as this history proceeds.

He was still an invalid when the following conversation took place between Sir Hercules Kilbryde and Dr. Kane.

"There are more things, doctor," said Sir Hercules, as he finished reading a letter one morning at breakfast—"there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

"That's not a particularly new idea," observed the doctor.

"I know that," replied Sir Hercules. "Hamlet said it a thousand years ago, or Shakspeare for him, and people have quoted it millions of times, I dare say, but it's as true as the Bible."

"How does it apply at present?" asked Dr. Kane.

"You shall hear. You recollect the fancy I had about the young fellow up stairs. By the by, doctor, how is he to-day?"

"Mending fast. Next week I hope to have him on his legs again."

"That's good news. And I can tell *you* some that won't hurt him!"

"How so?"

"Here's a letter all about him. I was right from the first. There, rade it!" Dr. Kane did as he was requested. When he had ended he put down the letter, and looked in the colonel's face with a smile. "You're a witch!" said he. "Now, tell me, who's Henry Dalton?"

"A clergyman in Yorkshire—an old friend of my father's, and of mine too. The first time I ever came to France he was my companion, or, rather, I was his, for he's some fifteen years my senior. We've never altogether lost sight of each other, though I was so long in India."

"And now he writes to ask you to do your best to find out what's become of a boy who is actually under your roof. As odd a thing as ever I heard of! One might make a play of it!"

"As you say, it bates cock-fighting. Only think! Let me read it over again: 'You remember Walter Cobham of your regiment, a cousin of mine two degrees removed? But why should I ask the question'—why, indeed?—'having just learnt that you were present at his marriage with that beautiful girl, Edith Scrope, whom he ran away

with? So much you know, but I feel sure you are ignorant of the fact that there was issue by that marriage; a boy, who, while quite a child, was taken to France and brought up there by a certain Monsieur and Madame Perrotin, both of whom you must recollect'—faith I do, entirely—'the former the French master of Mrs. Scrope's daughters, the latter their maid, Rachel. The Perrotins took the boy away from a wretched home in which Mrs. Scrope had placed him, with the view, no doubt, of alienating him from all knowledge of his family, especially of his mother, who believes him to have been stillborn. More of her, poor thing, another time; at present, all the interest of the question centres in her child. It appears that while a student in Paris, and living at the house of a Monsieur Clovis, in the Rue Coq-héron, he was one of a party to the great annual fair in the forest of Saint-Germain, where, owing to some cause not yet explained, he was stabbed by a man who is now, with an accomplice, in the prison of Vernon. Whether the boy was killed or not is a subject of the deepest anxiety not only to Monsieur Perrotin, from whom I have the whole account, but to myself. I cannot conceive it possible that a murder should be committed in so frequented a place without discovery of the body, and this, I am assured, has not yet been the case; but how the boy has been preserved, or if he really lives, remains a mystery.'—It won't be a mystery long, my dear fellow!—'The spot where this catastrophe occurred is, if I remember rightly, within a league or two of Maisons, where you wrote me word you were now living. There is no occasion, my dear Kilbryde, for me to appeal to your humanity——' Neither is there any occasion for me to read any more of the letter; we've got the boy safe and sound—that's to say, very nearly so—without bating the bushes ourselves, or troubling the police to do so; and what we must set about now, as soon as I've satisfied Dalton, is the restitution of his rights. It's just as well I happened to be to the fore!"

"Well," said Dr. Kane, "as far as one can judge from appearances, the boy deserves to be righted. A manlier young fellow, or a better patient, never came under my hands! Not a word of complaint have I heard from his lips since the moment we first laid him on the bed! He has been all hope, and that has helped me a good deal, I can tell you."



"We know now who 'Rachel' is," said Sir Hercules, smiling; "I wonder who is Mary?"

"Time will reveal, you may be sure, if he don't; but the owner of so frank a face never kept a secret very long."

"Unless it was a lady's!"

"That, indeed! But what do you say, colonel? Shall we go and see this fortunate youth?—for very fortunate I think him, after all his troubles."

"He has had 'em to begin with, like the young bears," philosophically remarked Sir Hercules, as he led the way to Walter's room. They found him sitting up in bed, reading. He put down his book as they entered, and stretched out both his hands.

"I am getting so strong, sir!" he said to Sir Hercules. "What do you think? the doctor tells me I shall be able to take a walk in a few days!"

"I am very glad to hear it, Mr. Cobham," said Sir Hercules.

"'Mr. Cobham!'" exclaimed Walter; "good God, sir! how came you to know my name? Has Jules been here, —or Rachel,—or Monsieur Perrotin?"

"Neither of them, my boy. A little bird has told us all about you. More than you know yourself."

Walter looked all amazement.

"Is he well enough to bear it, doctor, if I told him?"

"Let me feel your pulse, young gentleman. Full, but soft and regular. Look at his eye and his mouth! Courage enough, there, for anything."

"You need not mind speaking, sir," said Walter, firmly.

"Unless some harm has happened to—to—Rachel, or poor Jules, I shan't flinch, sir."

"Who talked of harm, my boy? It's good I'm maning."

"I might have been sure of that, sir; you and the doctor have never shown me anything but kindness!"

So much, then, of Mr. Dalton's letter as was necessary for his information Sir Hercules read, while Walter listened with breathless attention. "And you were my father's friend, sir! And I have a mother, after all, besides my dearest Rachel! When shall I see her, sir—can you tell me? I will get up and go anywhere!"

"No, my dear fellow, you must remain quiet here a little while longer. You must have patience, though I dare say it's more than one person you're longing to see again."

Poor Walter's face, pale enough before, became suddenly burning red. "I—I——" he began stammering.

"There, there! said Dr. Kane, laughing, "don't press him too hard, colonel; I didn't say he could stand that."

"I know what you mean," said Walter. "There is somebody I want to see who has not yet been mentioned."

"And her Christian name is 'Mary.'"

"That, sir, nobody can have told you. You must have guessed it."

"Dhramers sometimes talk in their slape."

"Have I named her, then, unconsciously? It is no wonder, for she is never absent from my thoughts. You tell me, sir, that my father was a gentleman, and my mother of high family. I have my way to make in the world, but I see no reason why the girl I love should not one day be my wife."

"His heart," said the doctor, "is not only in the right place, but high-placed."

"Well, well, my boy," said Sir Hercules, "all in good time. We must get you out and about, and it shan't be my fault if you don't get a pretty wife as well as a fortune. Now go to slape, if you can, for the doctor and I have business together." To sleep! Yes, sleep came at last, and again the names of those he loved were on his lips, with that of one he had never breathed before—his mother's!

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## CHAPTER XLV

### A LOVE CHASE.

HAVING shot all the grouse on the Grampians, and yearning now for Tuscan wild boar, Sir James Tunstall—his own master when the sports of the field were in question—consented to his wife's desire to turn his face to the south, and accompany her to Italy. Though not an invalid, like her sister, Lady Tunstall had been so much accustomed, of late years, to the climate of Southern Europe, that to winter in England was impossible. She had, moreover, a strong presentiment that a protracted stay at Scargill would yield little pleasure—little, perhaps, of comfort,—for her mother's waywardness showed itself more every day, and the gloom

on her mind became more habitual; even Mary's beauty and winning manners had ceased to be an unfailing charm. Neither did Mrs. Scrope offer any opposition to Lady Tunstall's wishes, and so they parted.

Sir James was a man fond of rapid locomotion; he also was one of those who fancy a thing worth nothing unless you get the very first of it. He had lost a week at the opening of the grouse shooting, and now he feared he should be too late to witness the inauguration of the wild boar season in the marshes of Magliano. He hastened, therefore, on his route, intending to remain in Paris only a single day; but, unfortunately, Sir James had a third *penchant*, which was more irresistible than quick travelling or select sporting: he never could withstand the seduction of a good dinner. Now, as there is no place in the world like Paris for dining to your heart's—or appetite's—content, Sir James made one of a party of half a dozen—men he knew, whom he met at Galignani's,—and leaving Lady Tunstall and Mary to their simple *côtelette* at the Hôtel Mirabeau, went with his friends to the *Trois Frères*. Neither birds'-nest soup nor *potage aux queues-de-rats* had then become the fashion, though in their stead—but never mind the *menu*, it was first-rate, and Sir James, I am sorry to say, over-ate himself to such an extent, and drank so much Romanée, that he was seized with gout, and instead of passing next day through the “Barrière d'Enfer,” on his way to Italy, found himself progressing, with very little barrier to stop him, in a direction which might possibly terminate where his intended journey was to have begun. He was saved, indeed, from that extremity, but only at the expense of a long and dangerous illness, which quite upset all his plans about wild boar, and kept him a prisoner in Paris. In the abstract, when you have good society and apartments that are “comfortables,” imprisonment in Paris is no such great hardship, and Lady Tunstall reconciled herself to her enforced residence the more readily because little of the great city was known to her daughter, to whom its treasures of art promised a source of inexhaustible delight. It was not, however, art alone that was destined to interest Mary Tunstall.

One day, after having spent several hours in the galleries of the Louvre, Lady Tunstall and Mary were returning to

their hotel, when a casual obstruction in the street brought their carriage to a full stop. It was a crowd that had assembled in the Place du Palais Royal, fascinated by the oratory of the famous Mengin, the peripatetic dealer in blacklead pencils.

"What an extraordinary-looking person that is, mamma," said Mary,— "do listen to him! He talks about his genius as if he were Raffaele or Leonardo da Vinci. Oh, it is too good!"

Indeed the man was worth attending to, for he was the prince of street orators, and very few excelled him in the Chamber. "Messieurs!"—thus ran his speech, to which the public were all ear—"the dream of my existence has been the manufacture of pencils, how to make those objects perfect the end and aim of all my ambition; to induce you, for your own good, to purchase them, is for me the summit of earthly happiness! Do I fear competition with such as strive to emulate my sublime discovery? Let my rivals show themselves! I am prepared at once to enter into the lists. But I have no rivals! They who, in my absence, dare to say that they can create pencils to equal mine, are only vile and insolent pretenders! My pencils, messieurs, are imprisoned ink! Spring has its roses—the sun its vivifying rays—and Mengin his pencils! Not a day of my life goes by that I do not receive a letter from one or other of the principal artists of France to thank me for my pencils! Even crowned heads have not disdained to send me their acknowledgments!"

"I think, Mary," said Lady Tunstall, laughing, "you ought really to become one of Monsieur Mengin's customers. How he goes on!"

"And look at the people, mamma,—how they stand staring with their mouths wide open. There is a man in a *blouse* who, I am convinced, will never be able to shut his again! He is standing close to that——"

What made Mary Tunstall stop so suddenly? What made her eyes swim and her breath come short? What made her so eagerly grasp her mother's arm?

"Mary, you hurt me!" cried Lady Tunstall, turning round. "Child! child! are you ill?"

"No, mamma, no!" gasped Mary, "but I see him there in the crowd! He is looking this way now. I can't be mistaken!"

"Who is looking? Who do you mean?"

"The—the—the Rouen chorister!" replied Mary—"the handsome boy,—that is to say," she added, blushing deeply; "the young man who—you remember that lovely voice, mamma?"

"To be sure I do, Mary. Where is he?"

"He sees us,—he is coming this way!"

That was Walter's intention, without doubt, but the impatience of Lady Tunstall's coachman prevented him. The Jehu, who was an Englishman, thought more about his horses catching cold than of the eloquent phrases of Monsieur Mengin—not a word of which he understood,—and, vigorously applying the whip at that moment, he forced a passage through the crowd, and whirling round the corner, dashed into the Rue de Richelieu before Mary could pull the check-string. "What a stupid person Butler is!" she exclaimed: "I can't make him turn his head!" No, it was too late, for by the time the coachman felt the pressure of the cord, the carriage was half way up the street.

"It is of no use to stop now," said Lady Tunstall. "Besides, it is a matter of no consequence. Home, Butler!"

Mary sank back in her seat, and did not speak again during the rest of the drive.

As for Walter, he was half frantic with vexation. It was the first time he had been in Paris since his accident, and he was on his way to the Rue Coq-héron to see Monsieur and Madame Clovis (whom he had already apprised of his safety, as well as his friends at Rouen), when he mingled with the people who were gathered round the car of Monsieur Mengin. Equally amused with the rest, it was only by chance he turned his eyes in the direction of Lady Tunstall's carriage, and there, to his astonishment, he beheld her daughter's beautiful face. He saw, too, that he was recognized, and with a look of welcome that made every fibre in his body thrill with joy. Elbowing those aside who stood near him, Walter might have succeeded in reaching the carriage, if the strong current caused by the crowd as they retreated from the plunging horses had not driven him back and rendered every effort to advance fruitless.

"I will meet it this way," he said, and turned to intercept the carriage by the Rue de Valois, but when he got into the Rue St. Honoré no carriage was there. Which turning had it taken? Instinct led him along the Rue de Riche-

lieu, and he ran as fast as he could. He came in sight of the vehicle as it paused at the corner of the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, but it was only a momentary glimpse; on it went again, and Walter after it, shouldering into the gutter everybody he met, and reaping on his course a plentiful harvest of the choicest Parisian imprecations. At the angle formed with the Rue de la Paix Walter was only a hundred yards behind. He redoubled his speed—in vain! When he reached the Rue de la Paix the street was empty.

"They must have driven into some *porte-cochère*," he said. "I will walk up and down till midnight! I will never leave the place till I discover where she is gone!"

The afternoon had been creeping on, and it was already dusk, but Walter persevered, and—it is pleasant to record the fact—his perseverance was rewarded. In the very first entrance he stopped at stood the carriage of which he had been in pursuit; he was even in time to see Lady Tunstall and Mary descend from it. But he saw no more. While he hesitated to advance, the doors were closed, and he gazed on a blank. "What place is this?" said Walter, looking up. "The Hôtel Mirabeau! I shall not forget it. I wonder if she lives here. There can be no harm in asking." He lifted the heavy knocker, a sharp click loosened the hinges of the wicket, he pushed it open, and proceeded straight to the *loge* of the *concierge*. "Is there an English family staying here?" he asked.

"Mais oui, monsieur! il y en a plusieurs."

"A lady and her daughter," said Walter; both tall, both very handsome—particularly the younger one."

The porter looked at him inquisitively, without replying.

"Tell me their names." And as he spoke, he put a five-franc piece in the porter's hand.

"Diable!" said the man, "I would tell you with all my heart, if I could only pronounce them! Here, look at the book and read the list yourself."

Walter hastily ran his eye down the page; but to what purpose? He did not know who to ask for. But he bethought himself. "Whom does that carriage belong to?" he asked, pointing to one in the courtyard, from which the horses were being taken.

"Ca? c'est le Numéro Un, au premier. Ce sont des milords!"

Walter read : " Sir James and Lady Tunstall."

He thanked the porter, and, with a beating heart, hurried away to the place where he had put up the cabriolet that brought him to Paris that morning.

" What famous spirits you are in, Walter," said Sir Hercules, returning his joyous greeting. " The sight of your old friends has done you good."

" Old friends ! " cried Walter. " Ah, you shall know all."

And before he went to bed that night he told the story of his love for Mary Tunstall.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE PROVERB VERIFIED.

INHERITING the quick spirit of his father, Walter could not rest till he had poured out all his thoughts to her who occupied them wholly. His impatience would not allow him to wait till a reasonable hour, and long before Sir Hercules and Dr. Kane were up, he was again on the road to Paris, arriving at the Barrière de l'Etoile with the very first market-carts. As love is subjected to no *octroi*—though the tax might be a productive one—the cabriolet passed through the barrier unprobed, if not unexamined, and leaving Philippe, the groom, to stable his steed and amuse himself how he pleased till dusk, Walter directed his steps towards the Rue de la Paix.

It was so early that he shared the street with a *chiffonnier*, a couple of water-carriers, and the sentinel on duty at the barracks of the *sapeurs-pompiers*. Scarcely a window-shutter was thrown back, only here and there a shop opened; and even the postman had not made his appearance. It was decidedly too soon to pay a morning visit; but, indeed, although in a most desperate hurry to reach his destination, Walter had not quite made up his mind what to do when he got there. Looking round, with a kind of comic despair, he perceived that the only *café* in the street was preparing to receive its earliest *habitués*, and this reminded him that he might as well breakfast there, his chance of obtaining that meal elsewhere being something more than doubtful.

so happened that the *café* stood nearly opposite the

Hôtel Mirabeau, and, by choosing a table near the door, Walter was able to command the entrance of the house, so that nobody could pass in or out unseen by him. To avoid the appearance of making a mere convenience of the *café*, he ordered three times as much breakfast as he wanted, and though he sent the greater part away untasted, had no idea that either the waiter or the *dame de comptoir* penetrated his secret, as if such very knowing persons were not in the habit of forming pretty accurate conclusions when handsome young gentlemen sit down to breakfast, eat nothing to speak of, and keep their eyes fixed on the other side of the street. But it did not signify: discretion so much abounds, there is so vast a sympathy in Paris for affairs of the heart, that, except an occasional glance or smile on the part of the aforesaid waiter and *dame de comptoir*, nobody would have supposed that Walter's pre-occupation had in the slightest degree attracted their attention.

Like Rosalind's young maid, between the day of her marriage contract and its solemnization, time's pace was a hard one while Walter sat and watched. Nine—ten—eleven—he was as weary of counting the hours as the Hungarian Gabor in Werner's secret passage! During their tedious course he resolved to profit by the first symptom of movement in the apartments opposite, and present himself with the best excuse he could frame; but it seemed as if the opportunity would never offer. It was in vain that he looked at the windows; the closely-drawn curtains proved an impenetrable screen, no one came near to cast them aside—and another hour was added to those which Walter had already wasted.

"Why," he said, "should I wait any longer? Do I expect a message to say when they are ready to receive me? I will take my chance and go at once!"

He rose quickly, paid the bill with a liberality that made the waiter open the eyes of astonishment, and was leaving the *café* when he saw a carriage coming out of the *porte-cochère* of the Hôtel Mirabeau. "I am too late, after all!" he exclaimed, recognizing the horses; "they are going out! Stay! I can't see her! She is sitting back! No! She is not there; it is only her mother! Oh, drive as fast as you like, and stay away as long as you please!"

At these words he hastily crossed over, waited for a few



moments till the carriage was quite out of sight, and then, addressing the *concierge*, asked, with a demure face, if Lady Tunstall was at home.

"Miladi has this instant gone out," replied the man.

"Is—are—any of the family in?"

"Milord still keeps his bed; he continues very ill——"

"And—and—Miss Tunstall?"

The *concierge* smiled. Perhaps he was fond of five-franc pieces—liked them better in the concrete than apart! At all events, he put Walter's napoleon in his pocket, and indicated the position of Sir James Tunstall's apartments. Lady Tunstall had carried off the *chasseur*, Sir James's valet was absent on his own affairs, and Walter was admitted by a smart French *femme de chambre*, who, after conducting him through two or three rooms, threw open the last of the suite, and glad to be spared the trouble of an English name, simply announced "Un Monsieur Anglais!"

Mary Tunstall was alone, practising at a piano, with her back to the door. She had not heard what the *femme de chambre* said, and if the little spaniel had not begun to bark, Walter might have had leisure to gaze on her for some time undisturbed. "Chorister! be quiet, Chorister!" she said. "You put me out. Naughty dog, lie still!"

But Chorister refused to obey the voice of his mistress, and she turned to learn the cause.

On a former occasion the barking of her pet spaniel had announced an intruder, when Matthew Yates came stealing through the trees in Scargill Park; it was a link in the same chain, one closely connected by fate with Matthew Yates, an intruder, too, perhaps—no, not in Mary's eyes, though she could scarcely believe what they showed her!

"Mary!" he said, "have you forgotten me?"

"Oh, no, no!" she answered; your name is Walter. We met last summer in the cathedral at Rouen. I did not think you could have remembered me."

"You are not changed—your face is the same I always dream of. How could I cease to remember the most beautiful object my eyes have ever dwelt on? How forget her who sent me this precious token?"

He took out the cameo as he spoke.

"It is like you," he said—"very like! Still more so now you turn your eyes away."

"I am afraid it was very wrong in me to give it you."

"You do not want to have it back again?"

"Oh no—I did not mean that! I only meant——"  
She broke off abruptly—"How came you to know we were here?"

"I followed you home."

"But we returned so quickly. The coachman drove so fast. I thought it impossible for you to overtake us."

"They who pursue what they love, Mary, meet with no impediments."

"Walter," she replied, "you must not speak to me in that manner. We have only seen each other once before."

"And that once, Mary, is the great event of my life. I have been nearly dying—was left for dead,—but as long as I had consciousness I thought of that moment."

"Have you been ill?" she asked, with tears quickly gathering in her eyes.

"An attempt was made to kill me——Why do you turn so pale?—it failed, you see! Friends—strangers at that time—rescued me from death: to their kindness I owe my recovery. But they saved me to little purpose, Mary, if I may not tell you what I feel."

"But I ought not to listen, Walter, for your words are not like those I hear from every one else."

"Thank Heaven! Oh, Mary, dearest, if I speak in a different language from others, do not hate me for that!"

"Hate you, Walter!"

Her accent said much, but her eyes more, and Walter read in them a love equal to his own. He took her hand—it trembled; he raised it to his lips.

At that moment the door was suddenly opened by the French *femme de chambre*. "Ah, mademoiselle," she said, "milor vous demande. Il est très souffrant!"

"You must go, Walter," said Mary.—"I cannot return. My father is so ill! I must stay by his side."

"When—when shall I see you again?"

"I cannot tell—I dare not think of it: it must not be here, alone. Mamma must know when next you come. Go, go, dear Walter!"

The appeal was too earnest to be resisted. He followed the *femme de chambre* to the outer door; he found himself in the street. The sun was shining, and the sky was bright above.

"Am I in a dream?" he said; "if so, may it last for ever!"  
Did these two young people understand each other too quickly?

What says honest Biondello to enamoured Lucentio?

"I knew a wench married in an afternoon, as she went into the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit."

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE SEARCH.

THE landlord of "Piccadilly's White Bear" had not over-rated the sagacity of Mr. Detective Wormwood. An hour's conversation with Monsieur Perrotin supplied that acute officer with all the preliminary information he required, and he drew upon his own resources for the rest. These resources were ample, and he soon satisfied himself that the person he was in quest of must be found within a particular radius—London and its environs being mapped out in Mr. Wormwood's experience with even more than postal accuracy. For a time he pursued his search alone; but when he had exhausted certain districts, and narrowed the field of inquiry, he made Monsieur Perrotin his companion.

"While we both of us makes use of our legs, mounseer"—John Wormwood adhered to the old form of pronunciation—"you must keep your eyes open, for the purpose of identifying this here chap, in case we happens to stumble on him in our walks. Don't let e'er a one go past you without taking of his measure, only mind you don't look straight *at* the parties, leastways into their eyes, for then they looks into yourn, and the game's all up; they knows directly if they're wanted, and out of sight they dives in less than no time, and ten to one you never sees nothing of 'em again as long as you live! Lord bless you, identification ain't noways difficult, if ever you have, what I call, *really* known a man. I once, in a crowd, saw nothing but a hat and the up-and-down motion of a pair of shoulders, and the next moment I had as good as a fifty-pun' note in my pocket: never ketched sight of his face till he turned round and found hisself grabbed."

It was a relief to Monsieur Perrotin's melancholy to

accompany the detective, and together they roamed, late and early, through all the likeliest suburbs, till Chelsea, Hammersmith, Kensington, and Bayswater had been thoroughly sifted, and then they prepared to explore the rural region which covers London on the north-west.

"There's two ways of playing at hide-and-seek, mounseer," said Mr. Wormwood; "there's the social dodge, when you goes and mixes yourself up with the metropolis—this here London of ours, you understand; and there's the solitary dodge, when you keeps away from it altogether. If it's a personal matter, and you has friends that will help you to keep it dark, my advice is, stick to the bricks and mortar; but if others is in it, don't trust to no friendships—folks is tempted sometimes, and does queer things to save their own bacons—but go and take a walk into the country and keep yourself to yourself; then nobody can't peach on you, if they're ever so minded. Now this precious Mister Yates's line ain't in no respect a town business; barred-up winders ain't popular, 'cept among sheriffs' officers, and London streets is too condoocive of gaiety to the feelings to soot them as has the care of lunattics; they chooses outside situations, where nobody can't overlook the premises or hear what's going on in 'em, places as don't rise the sperrits, but otherwise keeps 'em down, such as the neighbourhoo of semmetries, gas-works, and such-like establishments. Therefore, mounseer, if you've no objection, we'll try the St. John's Wood side to-day. Ah, that was a reg'lar place once! I remember the time when you might see the inmates a-grinning at you over the walls at every turn; but these here revolutions abroad—you'll excuse me, mounseer—has so filled the 'Wood' with forriners, no other madmen ain't to be met with in that there quarter."

"I go where you please, mon cher Monsieur Vermoud," replied the docile Frenchman, "so that it encourage the hope to find my wife. Yes, I could meet her now with a more pleasant face than yesterday, for good news was arrive this morning. I hear of the dear boy's safety!"

"Ah!" said the detective, "how came that about, if I may make so bold?"

Monsieur Perrotin produced a letter addressed to Rachel by Walter himself, which had been forwarded by Monsieur Vermeil. It contained a full account of all that had befallen

him from the time of his misadventure in the forest up to the period of his recovery; indeed, it went further, for there was a hasty postscript which said: "I have seen *her* again! Oh, Rachel, if you were only here—you, and another for whom I yearn—I should want nothing to make me happy. Come, dearest Rachel, come as quickly as you can!" This postscript not being intelligible to Monsieur Perrotin, he did not read it to Mr. Wormwood, but nothing else was omitted, and the detective declared he was very glad it was all right with the young gentleman.

"I hope," he said, "Mister Yates will soon be boxed, as well as them two froggified French rascals—no offence, mounseer, in calling of 'em by that name—if a man's a rascal, it don't signify whether he's French or English; I'm sure our chap deserves it as much as they do! Now, which shall it be?" continued the detective, as Monsieur Perrotin and himself were proceeding along Baker Street; "shall we turn to the right or the left when we gets to the New Road, or go straight forward? I'm agreeble to ayther, for when one's not acting on information, it's all luck, and as you don't know this part of the town, your opinion can't bias or incommode in any way."

To this appeal Monsieur Perrotin replied in favour of a direct route. "That will take us right through the Wood," said the detective; "so be it. We'll walk easy, just as if we had business that warn't very partic'lar. Foggy weather, when it's not too thick, is useful in my profession. This here Baker Street always has enough of it when fogs is going about; we shall have it more clearer when we gets further on!" Clearer it was, but still misty and damp, and the "Wood," as they went through it, presented no very cheerful appearance, the rime dripping from the trees like a shower-bath; neither did the country look much more inviting, when the last row of houses was left behind. To beguile the way, however, Mr. Wormwood discoursed of his own personal reminiscences, and had some singular story to tell in relation to every subject.

He it was who captured the man that murdered his friend—there—in the lonely pathway, beside the high park wall. When the last fatal duel that ever was fought took place, he (Mr. Wormwood) came up in time to help to carry the colonel's dead body into the public-house they had

just passed ; in a pond to the left, after five days' search, he found the great box of plate made away with by the butler who lived in the large house on the top of yonder hill. He could point out the exact spot at which he took off his hat to a gentleman riding by, the owner of a noble mansion in one of the finest squares in London, the very day before he arrested him for forgery ; there was scarcely a person they met or an object they saw that did not revive in the detective's memory some anecdote of crime.

In this manner they proceeded, the one talking and the other listening, till they reached an open space crossed a short distance before them by the road that leads from Hampstead to Hendon. Mr. Wormwood stopped here, and leaned his back against a milestone while he pointed out to Monsieur Perrotin one of his remarkable sites.

"Half an hour ago, mounseer," he said, "I was mentioning of the business at Chalk Farm, when one officer killed another, his own brother-in-law, 'cause of a difference between 'em that ought never to have been. Well, there was just as bad a thing happened not a couple of hundred yards from the spot we're now standing on, and no better reason for the shedding of blood in this case than the other. It warn't in my time, though, but my father's ; he was what they used to call a Bow Street runner, mounseer, and saw a good deal of life in his day. Him and me never come along this road, which it was a favourite walk of his, without his setting down just where I'm a setting at this moment, and telling me the very same story that I'm a-going to tell you. There warn't so many clubs then as now, but in them they had there was a deal more gambling. Whether it was cards or dice my father couldn't say, but money was lost one night that led to angry words between two gentlemen, and out of that come a horsewhipping and a meeting with pistols ; and him that had the horsewhipping wasn't shot at, but got a nickname which, p'raps, was worse. Now in this here affair the second to the gentleman that gave the whipping was a well-known nobleman, and it behoved him some little time afterwards to call the other by his nickname, meaning no offence, but only for fun, whereupon he turned round quite hot and peppery, and said something the nobleman couldn't stand, and nothing would do but satisfaction. Golder's-green, this here very place,

was the ground they chose, and here they met one morning in February, the last day of the month my father said it was, and face to face they stood only six paces from each other, and at the signal given both of 'em fired, and down dropped the nobleman—it was nigh the clump of rushes there just in front of that gig you see coming along the road from Hendon,—and when they picked him up they saw there wasn't no hopes of saving of him, for the ball had lodged right in the middle of his vitals. So they picked him up—the gig is coming this way, there are two in it, a man and a boy,—and carried him to the nearest house, and two days afterwards he was dead, that nobleman was, and if I'd been one of the jury that set on his body I should have given as my verdict, 'Died by the visitation of nonsense,' which all duels is, and a good thing it is they're all done away with."

Monsieur Perrotin had been standing with his back to the high road while Mr. Wormwood was speaking, only turning his head to notice the spot where the duel was fought; but the sound of wheels close behind him as the detective finished his story made him look suddenly round. An exclamation rose to his lips, but he suppressed it, and instantly resuming his former position, he raised his finger and shot a glance at the driver of the gig—a sturdy, square-built man, dressed like a sort of gentleman farmer.

"You don't mean it?" said Mr. Wormwood, under his breath. Monsieur Perrotin nodded in reply.

"Certain?" Monsieur Perrotin nodded again.

"He's out of hearing now: you may speak up," said the detective.

"That is the man," returned Monsieur Perrotin. "I swear at him."

"That won't do no good, mounseer, you must swear *to* him!"

"It is what I will say. The person in the boghey is Yate."

"I shall know him again, mounseer, his face was towards me; and an uglier face I have seldom seen. Now the question is, where did he come from? The roads is dirty and his wheels was clean, only a splash or two on the body of the gig; he can't have been out long, nor live far off. Let me see: he came on to the Green from the Hendon side; we must take that direction. You'll excuse my not

answering of anything you may remark, Mounseer, till I opens my mouth spontaneously."

Mr. Wormwood followed the gig with his eyes till it was out of sight, and then turning, struck into a path which led across the Green to the angle where it joined the Hendon road, Monsieur Perrotin keeping close at his side. The entrance on this side to the long, straggling village is pleasant in summer, from the shade it offers, but in the winter its aspect is rather gloomy. They passed several houses, the situation of which was too exposed to suit such a person as Mr. Yates, but at length the Detective paused to examine one that was separated from the road by a deep ditch and high palings, both of which seemed to run all round the garden in which it stood; the trees that screened it on all sides were very thickly planted, and many of them being evergreens, little of the house was visible; there were two entrances, with a wide space between, but the first they came to was padlocked, and the path that led from it inside was mildewed and untrodden; the second gate appeared alone to serve for admission, and on a wicket beside it was a discoloured brass plate bearing the inscription of "Rose Cottage."

"Not an unlikely place this," said Mr. Wormwood; "but we mustn't be in no hurry. Let's look for a public; we may find out something there."

Half a mile further and the effigy of a grey swan, bearing beneath it the name of J. Tubbs, announced the village inn. They entered, and Mr. Wormwood called for a pint of "dog's-nose," and while it was being prepared he entered into conversation with the innkeeper.

It was, he observed, a nice, tidy sort of village; were there any houses to let, now? He was looking out for one, not too large, but big enough for a family of six or eight, with a spare bedroom or two. Did Mr. Tubbs know of such a thing? Well, Mr. Tubbs couldn't exactly say what might please the gentleman; what some people fancied others mightn't to; Hendon was a biggish place, more nor a mile long; there was houses of all sizes to let, mostly at the furthest end; he didn't know of none thereabouts, except the beer-shop over the way; he meant what had been the beer-shop, for he was thankful to say the late proprietor was sold up, and a greater scamp—Mr. Wormwood,



cutting short an episode which might have proved as long as the village itself, here interposed by saying he had remarked a place called "Rose Cottage," which did not seem occupied; did that happen to be vacant? Mr. Tubbs smiled and shook his head. He rather thought the gentleman wouldn't over like to be an inmate of Rose Cottage—not just then. Oh yes, it was occupied, hadn't been empty since he'd lived in Hendon, warn't likely to be, so long as there was folks as stood in need of other folks purtecting of 'em, and keeping of 'em out o' harm's way—the gentleman understood him, no doubt. Rose Cottage was what they called a private establishment; it was an uncommon quiet one; nobody know'd nothing of what went on inside of it: he didn't; if beer was drunk on Mister Yates's premises, none of it went from the Swan.

This was enough. Mr. Wormwood repressed an anxious movement on the part of his companion, said he should look round him, lingered a few minutes over his "dog's-nose," talking quietly of the weather, and so forth, and then wished Mr. Tubbs good morning.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### THE RESCUE.

WHAT misery had been Rachel's since the night when she was carried off by Matthew Yates!

It was not enough that he had succeeded in securing her person: his object also was to ascertain the motive which had taken her into Yorkshire, and extract from her every particular of Walter's history of which he was himself ignorant. But cajolement and menaces, resorted to by turns, were alike ineffectual: deep as was her depression, Rachel's resolution was unyielding, and not a word would she reply to the ceaseless questionings by which she was assailed. On the other hand, her tears and petitions were equally unheeded. Sympathy from her own sex she found none, the keeper's wife being of as harsh a nature as her brutal husband, and no resource remained save earnest prayer, and the trust she reposed in a merciful Providence.

Besides being baffled in his expectations, another cause of

annoyance arose for Yates. No tidings reached him from Auguste Mercier, who, long before this, he thought, should have succeeded in the object for which he went to Paris. Had the fellow deceived him? or had he failed in his project? He was unable to answer either question, and the trouble of uncertainty was added to other reasons for disquiet. At last some intelligence arrived, but not of a kind to make him thankful for learning it.

It was conveyed to him by a paragraph in the *Times*, which was thus worded: "We learn from *Galignani* that a singular case of attempted murder and abduction is about to be tried at the forthcoming assizes of the department of the Seine Inférieure, the intended victim being a young Englishman whose private history is said to be associated with various romantic incidents, in connexion with which the names of more than one English family of rank are mentioned. The actual perpetrators of the outrage are already in custody, but if the alleged confession of one of them—not the principal—is to be credited, the source of the plot will be traced to an agent on the other side of the Channel. We forbear from saying more at present, lest the ends of justice should be thereby frustrated."

Matthew Yates turned pale as he read this passage. The plot, then, had failed, but who was the delator? "Not the principal!" To whom had Mercier, in his folly, confided a secret of so much moment? By the mention of "English families of rank," it was plain that the statement was no vague conjecture. If Mercier *had* attempted murder, contrary to the instructions given, why did he pause half-way? Better have done the job completely, and then there would have been none of this tell-tale evidence. Had Mrs. Scrope taken his (Yates's) advice from the first, the child its mother thought was dead need never have lived to trouble them! The allusion to an English agent made him tremble. It was no new feature in the relations between the two countries, for the police of France to seek assistance in London. How did he know that they were not already on his track?

If Yates had followed his own inspirations he would at once have sought safety in flight, but he was withheld from doing so by more than one consideration. In the first place, he feared to stir, even on his own account, without the authority of Mrs. Scrope, and in the next he was dependent

upon her for the means of doing so. He was a man of dissolute conduct and expensive habits; and, large as had been the sums received by him from time to time from his patroness, he never had money at command: at this moment he was almost entirely without resources.

Mrs. Scrope's commands had always been that Yates should in no case write to her when it was possible for him to make a personal communication, and, after consulting with his wife, the keeper determined to go down to Scargill Hall, fixing his journey for the day after that on which he was seen by Monsieur Perrotin and the Detective. It was for the purpose of gleaning further information from the French newspapers, if it were to be obtained, that he went into town, a foreign house near Leicester-square, a low sort of *café* and reading-room, being one of his haunts; at this place he had given his address under a feigned name, when he parted with Auguste Mercier. While he is on his errand, we return to Hendon. "What must now be done, Monsieur Vermoud?" asked the teacher of languages, when he left the Swan with the Detective.

"Reconnoiter the premises, I think, Mounseer, as well as we're able to," was Mr. Wormwood's reply. "It's a place, I should say, where no strangers is admitted except on business, and as my business and theirs is different, I don't expect they'd let me in if I was to call and leave my card. Still there's nothing like trying."

Arrived at the gate which he had already scrutinized, Mr. Wormwood tried to open it. "Just what I thought," he said. "Shuts on a spring, no doubt. Outside bells are scarce here, seemingly; but there's spikes and tenterhooks in plenty: look at 'em, Mounseer, how they runs along the tops of the palings, like sharks' teeth, only crookeder. Nothing rips up the inexpressibles or makes such nasty jags as them tenterhooks. I've the marks of two or three about me to this hour. We'll let the front of Rose Cottage alone, there's too many thorns!"

An adjoining field afforded an exit from the road; and availing himself of it, Mr. Wormwood approached the house by the side, followed closely by Monsieur Perrotin. As the Detective had originally supposed, it was fenced in all round. One point, however, at the back seemed of easier access than any other part, and here Mr. Wormwood took counsel

with his companion. "It's a shivery kind of a preposition as I'm about to make," said the Detective, "but if you didn't mind passing an hour or two along of me in this here plantation, I fancy something might turn up, as the newspapers say, 'to our advantage.' As there's lots of leaves on the everlasting, we don't run much risk of being seen, particularly at this time of the year, when it gets dark so soon. Shall I give a leg, Mounseer, or take one?"

This last inquiry referred to precedence in crossing the fence, and as Monsieur Perrotin was less skilled in scaling barriers than Mr. Wormwood, he accepted that gentleman's assistance, and, by dint of some manœuvring, managed to get over the palings without damage either to his integuments or his person. The Detective was equally successful, and at last they both stood safe and sound within the precincts of the domain.

"We shall do pretty well now, Mounseer," said the officer, "perwided there's no dawgs. If, by misfortune," he continued, pointing to the butt-end of a pistol which peeped from a side-pocket, "one should set upon us, he must be silenced with this here, though I'd rather keep *my* barker quiet for the present."

With great precaution the two then stole into the plantation, till, through the openings of the branches, they got a tolerably good view of the house. It was a very plain, square building, suggesting very little of the "Cottage," and nothing of the "Rose:" only one window, on the ground floor, allowed daylight to enter, the rest were all closed by French shutters, painted so dark a green as to look quite black. Monsieur Perrotin gazed wistfully at the *jalousies*, and heaved a deep sigh.

"Well, Mounseer," said the Detective, in a low voice, "it's natteral that you should feel for her sittuation, poor thing, but you must keep up. We'll have her out of that, please God, before we're very much older! Why, what's this? Not a dawg, exactly, but a kennel, and a pretty big 'un! He must have been a goodish-sized ænnimle as lived in it. There ain't no recent marks, so I conjecturs the owner's dead, which is all the better for us. What do you say, Mounseer, to setting down inside this here concern while I takes a peep at the house? You'll be warmer there, and more out of sight!"

Waiving what was derogatory in the proposal, and feeling that dignity must occasionally be sacrificed to convenience, Monsieur Perrotin crept into the kennel, and found no difficulty in assuming a tolerably comfortable sitting posture. I wish to say nothing disrespectful of the excellent teacher of languages, but truth obliges me to admit that, from the grimness of his aspect, as he sat there thinking of the villany of Matthew Yates, the mistake might have been pardoned of supposing that the kennel's late tenant was still watching at his post. Meantime Mr. Wormwood, keeping on the blind side of the house, crept close to it, and began a very minute inspection. He was absent about half an hour, and then returned as carefully as he went.

"It may be a female voice as I have just heard," he said, "but if so, the lady is troubled with gruffness, and, drawing of it mild, I should say she was a bit of a wirago. But you needn't to fear, Mounseer, it was only voice; no violence other than bad langwidge. Stooping down in the porch, with my ear to the key-hole, I could make out that she was coming down-stairs grumbling considerable, and every now and then turning round with a threat at somebody as wouldn't answer her: a lady, of course, can't swear, it's not becoming, but what this here one let out sounded wery like oaths. She expected her husband home soon, she said, and then she promised to 'give it her'—you understand what that means—but we must perwent her. As there seems to be nobody else in the house but Madam and this man's wife, I fancy it won't be a difficult matter: only we must keep a sharp look-out." The Detective now squatted down at the edge of the kennel, and continued to talk in a low key to Monsieur Perrotin, explaining what was to be done when the time for action arrived. Another half hour went by, and it became perfectly dark, the outer gloom corresponding well with the desolation of the place where Rachel was confined. Suddenly Mr. Wormwood ceased speaking, and pressed his companion's arm. A quick-stepping horse and a pair of light wheels were coming along the road, and the pace slackened as it drew near Rose Cottage, a token that Matthew Yates was returning. "Come along, Mounseer," whispered the Detective; "place yourself where I told you, on the right hand of the porch, I shall be on the left; as soon as the door is opened, rush in and seize the female while I tackle

the gent her husband—the boy we needn't to mind. Hark! he's at the gate. He's telling the boy to take the gig on somewheres—where he puts it up, no doubt. Well, it's one less, and them imps of boys is sometimes troublesome."

The ambush was laid as directed: presently the wicket closed, and Yates was descried approaching on foot. He came straight up to the porch, on either side of which, concealed behind two wide-spreading box trees, the Detective and Monsieur Perrotin were waiting, and tapping twice at the door gave a shrill whistle: there was a movement inside, a heavy bar was taken down, then a chain-bolt withdrawn, and the door stood open. At that instant, just as Yates's foot was on the threshold, the strong hand of Mr. Wormwood seized his collar from behind; with a sudden swing he was thrown backwards on the ground, and before he could recover himself the Detective's knee was on his breast and a pistol at his head. Simultaneously with this attack Monsieur Perrotin darted through the open doorway, and confronted Mrs. Yates, who stood in the passage with a light. "Wretched woman!" he cried, "where is my wife? I make you prisonare!"

The exclamation was unlucky, for it told the story of the scuffle beyond the porch. With the utmost presence of mind Mrs. Yates fell back a step, and lifting the heavy candlestick, struck the Frenchman so violent a blow on the forehead that he staggered and nearly fell. At the exclamation he made, and the extinction of the light, the Detective turned his head and slightly relaxed his hold of Matthew Yates, who, quickly perceiving what had happened, exerted all his strength, dislodged the officer, recovered his feet, and, before the other could seize him again, disappeared in the darkness. To secure the only advantage they had gained, Mr. Wormwood forced back the door, which Mrs. Yates was trying to close; he raised his pistol to the ceiling, fired one barrel, and by the light of the explosion caught a glimpse of Monsieur Perrotin's antagonist as she fled along the passage; he then heard a distant door bang, and all was quiet.

Not long, however, for the Teacher of Languages, raising his voice to its highest pitch, began loudly to clamour for his wife, and "Rachel! Rachel!" resounded through the house. A faint cry responded from above, and again Monsieur Perrotin called for her. "Just half a minnit," said Mr.

Wormwood, "and we'll find her : there's nobody here but ourselves. I never travels without my tools."

A blazing lucifer-match supplied the key to his meaning ; the fallen candle was re-lighted, and together they rushed up-stairs. Directed by the cry they had already heard, the Detective desired whoever was within to stand away from the door, and dashing his whole weight against it, the lock gave way, the thin pale face of Rachel was seen, and in the next moment she was locked in her husband's arms.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

### DISCLOSURES.

To the outer world, including all the strangers then in Paris, the year 1848 opened with pleasant prospects, though the cloud had already risen which was soon to overshadow the land.

Slowly recovering from his illness, Sir James Tunstall was still a prisoner in his hotel, with the desire as strong as ever upon him to reach Italy ; no longer, however, for the purpose of shooting wild boar, the season for that sport being over, but hoping to recruit his health at the Villa Lavagna, from whence Lord Deepdale sent the most pressing invitations.

"Edith's unaccountable depression," wrote her husband to Lady Tunstall, "appears to me to increase daily. I know not what remedy to devise, for the quiet which she has always sought cannot anywhere be more complete than in this beautiful, secluded place. Strange that one so kind and gentle as Edith, whose life, since I have known her, has been all tranquillity, should be the victim of what seems an incurable melancholy ! Had Heaven blest us with children, it might, I think, have been different with her ; with me, too, perhaps, though even the son I yearn for could never have wrought any change in the affection I bear for her who was my first and only love. But this expectation is long past, and all my thoughts are now centred on the one object of restoring or giving to Edith that sunshine of the mind which is so much wanting to her happiness. God knows, there is no sacrifice, if such were necessary on my part, that I would not cheerfully make, to see her again with the light

heart I remember, when she and you, Agatha, were girls together. You have heard me often say that Edith was more like her former self when you and Mary were our guests at Tivoli, than at any other period of her married life. A renewal of that visit here would do much, I am convinced, towards the realization of my fondest hope; and you, I feel assured, will not withhold your presence a day longer than you can help. You may judge, then, how much, independently of my regard for him, I have lamented Sir James's unfortunate illness, which has kept you from us. Edith's anxiety to see you, though she speaks of it less frequently than I, is, I am certain, quite as strong as mine; for upon one occasion, only two or three days since, she asked me whether it would be very tedious and difficult, at this season of the year, to travel to Paris, and on my replying that the journey itself presented no difficulty to speak of, provided she were strong enough to bear it, she smiled, and said her strength was greater than I imagined; from which I infer, that if she fancied it impossible for you to join us, she would really brave the distance, and surprise you by her appearance at the Hôtel Mirabeau. I have an idea, moreover, that if she did carry out this intention, she would endeavour to accomplish another—that of seeing her mother, who appears much to occupy her thoughts, a circumstance naturally to be attributed to the account which you gave of her in your last letter, when you described Mrs. Scrope's present manner of life. Edith's heavy sighs when she mentions her mother's name form the groundwork of my supposition, though it may, after all, be a mere fancy. Of one thing, however, I am satisfied, that she earnestly longs to see you and Mary again. This desire must not be thwarted. If the mountain cannot come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go the mountain. See! the possibility of our meeting soon has thrown a gleam of light over this page of gloom. Adieu, and believe me, ever your affectionate

“DEEPPALE.”

“It is, indeed, strange,” thought Lady Tunstall, as she pondered over this letter, “that Edith, with all the world at her command, should yet be unhappy. I try in vain to account for it; I cannot recall any event of her life before she married my cousin to warrant this deep-seated sorrow; and since her marriage Deepdale's care and tenderness have



been all that the most *exigente* nature—which is not Edith's—could require. Still there must be some passage in her history with which I am unacquainted, and several things of late have forced this conviction upon me: more particularly that strange communication from Rachel Loring, in which she spoke of circumstances affecting the family that she was not able or willing to write about. I wish I could have seen that woman, but Mr. Dalton sends me no satisfactory intelligence. The clue to her disappearance has, he says, been found, but he believes it will require time to discover where she now is; so that I must, perforce, have patience, if anything is to arise out of revelations from her. What is it she can have to reveal? Can it by chance have reference to the time when Edith, from some cause unknown to me, awakened in my mother that fearful anger which, even at this distance of time, I can scarcely think of without a shudder. Edith, I recollect, was banished for a whole year, and during that period Rachel Loring was her companion. Was it fear or selfishness that kept me silent when Edith's absence from home was so prolonged? Something, I doubt not, of both—for I trembled then at my mother's temper, and I own that my conduct towards poor Edith was never quite sisterly. But the fear and the selfishness are in my heart no more. My own spirit has long since risen to the level of all human passion, and pity for Edith's despondency has effaced the envy with which, I shame to say, my mind was stained. Neither could I witness her love for my darling child without feeling that she claimed at least an equal love from me. Were it in my power, then, to cure her malady, the effort should not be refused! But how assist while the cause of her disease is still a mystery? Deepdale is right, and Edith's longing is prophetic. Her confidence in me must be the remedy!"

This soliloquy of Lady Tunstall's was made on the afternoon of the day when Walter found his way into the Hôtel Mirabeau. Sir James had had a fresh twinge of gout, not so bad as the *femme de chambre's* words implied, but still severe enough to make him wish for a companion at his bedside; and thus Lady Tunstall sat alone while Mary was with her father. The post from Italy had just brought Lord Deepdale's letter, and Lady Tunstall was meditating her answer. Another subject might have divided her thoughts

had the mother and daughter been together, for it was not Mary's intention to have concealed her interview with Walter, but the opportunity for speaking of it did not present itself, and Lady Tunstall remained for the present in ignorance of what had occurred.

As much on Edith's as on her own account, Lady Tunstall would rather have set out immediately for the Villa Lavagna, but this relapse of Sir James's left her without the hope of doing so for a month to come, and still the more she reflected the more desirous she became to see her sister. If able and willing to travel, why should not Edith gratify her half-expressed wish? The exertion of the journey might do her good, the change of scene—the great change to France from Italy, where she had lived so long—would amuse if it did not greatly interest her: yes, Lady Tunstall would write and urge Edith to come!

She was about to execute her resolve without delay, when a servant entered the room and informed Lady Tunstall that two persons outside requested permission to wait upon her ladyship. To the question—What kind of persons? the servant answered that they were a man and woman, apparently husband and wife, the former elderly, the latter of middle age: the name they gave was Perrotin.

"Admit them directly," said Lady Tunstall, in some agitation: "at home to no one else while they remain."

The servant retired, and a few moments afterwards Rachel and Monsieur Perrotin were standing before Edith's sister.

"I have come, my lady," said Rachel.—But her emotion was so great she could not proceed.

"Sit down and compose yourself," returned Lady Tunstall, in a kind voice; "and you, sir, pray be seated."

After a pause of a few moments Lady Tunstall spoke again.

"You have been desirous to see me, I hear, for some time past. You went to Yorkshire for that purpose?"

"Yes, my lady," replied Rachel, "but I was prevented by a—a painful accident: I was taken away from that part of the country, and—and confined—in—in a private lunatic establishment."

"Shocking! And how were you able to leave it?"

"My husband and an officer found out where I was, my lady, and they rescued me away."

"Who was it that committed this outrage?"

"A person, my lady, of the name of Yates."

"Why was he your enemy?"

"Oh, my lady, I am afraid to say! I dare not tell you. And yet—and yet—I must. I came here on purpose. Yates, my lady, was once a—a kind of servant—that is, he was a good deal employed by my mistress."

"You mean my mother?"—"Yes, my lady."

"Had you quarrelled, then, on some occasion? It must have been about something serious for him to bear you malice in such a manner!"

"We had no quarrel, my lady. At least there had been words not very long before; but it was not on that account."

"You must speak plainer, Rachel, if you wish me to understand you. What motive had this man for removing you from Yorkshire?"

"He knew I had a secret which he was afraid of my telling you, my lady."

"What is that secret? Have you the same reason, still, for wishing to reveal it?"

"I have more—much more. Oh, I wish it could be told without my speaking!"

"It cannot relate solely to the person who injured you. That letter which Mr. Dalton gave me spoke of matters belonging to my family. Your secret, then, concerns us. Does your husband know it?" Monsieur Perrotin rose and bowed respectfully, pressing both hands to his breast. "In that case," continued Lady Tunstall, "I see no reason for your hesitation. To whom, in particular, does your secret refer?"

"To—to—Miss Edith! I mean, Lady Deepdale."

"To my sister!"

"Yes, my lady." Rachel's voice here sank to a whisper, but every syllable was heard. "To her—*first*—marriage!"

"Her first marriage!" echoed Lady Tunstall. "Gracious God! with whom? When? Where?"

As collectedly as she could, Rachel then went through the particulars of Edith's journey to the north, up to the period of her return to Scargill Hall after her secret marriage at Carlisle; she spoke of the shipwreck and death of Edith's young husband—and then she paused, fearing to go on.

"There is something more behind," said Lady Tunstall, in a low tone. "Was there any issue of this marriage? Had my sister a child?"

"Ye-e-s," faltered Rachel; then bursting into tears, she threw herself at Lady Tunstall's feet, and burying her head in her hands sobbed as if her heart was breaking; Monsieur Perrotin pulled out his handkerchief and walked to one of the windows; Lady Tunstall also was deeply affected; she gently raised Rachel's head and drew her closer, bending down to hear her words.

Resting thus on Agatha's lap with her streaming eyes turned upwards to Agatha's face, Rachel went on with her sad story, nor ceased till all was told: all that related to Edith's imputed madness; to her close confinement under the care of Yates and his wife; to her belief in the assertion that she had given birth to a still-born child; to the manner in which that child had been brought up; to the time when Monsieur Perrotin and herself—married in the mean while—carried Walter away with them to Rouen: to Walter's education there; to the arrival of Yates for the purpose of taking him from her; to Walter's removal to Paris; and finally to the circumstances which made her resolve to go to England and disclose her secret to Lady Tunstall.

With fixed and pained attention Agatha listened to the heartrending narrative of her sister's sorrows, to the gloomy tale of her mother's cruelty. Although no evidence was before her to prove the truth of Rachel's words, their manifest sincerity, in conjunction with a host of collateral circumstances which now came crowding on her mind, assured Lady Tunstall that what she heard was true. Edith's deep melancholy and Mrs. Scrope's bitter hatred were now accounted for—as well as her mother's later mood, in which remorse must have had some share. Other thoughts were awakened also by certain passages in Rachel's history. She remembered how strongly her daughter had dwelt on the likeness to Edith of the young chorister in Rouen Cathedral—a likeness which Sir James had confirmed. Her first question to Rachel was on this subject. Was he the boy whom the Perrotins had brought from England? Rachel answered in the affirmative, but did not venture to say more.

Where was he now? was Lady Tunstall's next inquiry.

Mr. Dalton, in sending Lady Tunstall's address to Monsieur Perrotin, had also written down that of Sir Hercules Kilbryde. Rachel showed the clergyman's letter, adding that she had only that day arrived in Paris, and had not yet

seen Walter ; knowing that he was with his father's old friend, and fearful of losing an hour, lest Lady Tunstall should be gone away, she had hurried first to the Hôtel Mirabeau. She now, as in duty bound, awaited her ladyship's pleasure. A long conversation ensued, in which Monsieur Perrotin was called upon to take part, and at its close, when again and again every point in Rachel's statements had been discussed, Lady Tunstall gave orders for rooms to be prepared in the hotel for the new-comers, and dismissed them—Rachel with much affection—for the evening.

She then took up the pen which she had laid aside on the entrance of the Perrotins, and wrote two brief but earnestly-worded letters—one to Lord Deepdale, its enclosure to her sister. "Here, Edith," she said, "your heart will find repose. This is no vain lure, but a truth as great as the mystery that makes our life. One line will assure you of this. An hour has not gone by since my ears drank in the story of Walter Cobham. *Another of the name survives.*"

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## CHAPTER L.

### A LITTLE MORE LIGHT.

AT an early hour next day—early, not only for a fine lady, but even for people of business—a carriage drove out of the *porte cochère* of the Hôtel Mirabeau, in which were Lady Tunstall and Rachel ; but, early as it was, more people were in the streets than one commonly saw there at high noon : not passing to and fro in pursuit of their ordinary affairs, but assembled in groups at corners, and evidently occupied with something unusual. Their faces were mostly towards the walls, though every now and then an excited countenance would turn, and an angry gesticulation appear, as if some unpopular *affiche* were the cause of the general pre-occupation. And such, indeed, was the fact, for on that morning had been issued the *ordonnance* prohibiting the public banquet which was to have taken place in the *Twelfth Arrondissement*. Lady Tunstall could not avoid noticing this grouping, but she looked upon it as a thing of no consequence ; her mind was, moreover, too much occupied to ~~show~~ now on the subject more than a passing thought.

Obedient to the instructions he had received, the coachman drove quickly, and taking the direction of the Champs Elysées, left Paris by the Avenue de Neuilly, making the best of his way towards the village of Maisons-sur-Seine. The first person of whom inquiry was made at once indicated the Château de Conflans, of which Sir Hercules Kilbryde was the tenant, and, much to that gallant officer's surprise, he was summoned from the breakfast table to receive a visitor. "Ladies!" said Dr. Kane, glancing at the carriage. "Your old luck, colonel!"

"What can one do, doctor?" returned Sir Hercules, laughing; "they *will* find me out!"

"What's on the card that François gave you?"

"I never thought of looking. Whew! Think of that, doctor. Lady Tunstall. Walter's darling's mamma. Oh, lord, but there'll be a pretty kettle of fish! Well, I must do the best I can for the poor fellow. He was off again before we got down."

But no haughty, implacable parent—as he had anticipated—stood before Sir Hercules. On the contrary, he beheld a smiling, graceful, handsome woman, who held out her hand to him the moment he entered the room into which she had been shown. "Before I say a word on the object of my visit," said Lady Tunstall, "I must thank you with all my heart, Sir Hercules Kilbryde, for your kindness to one in whom I am deeply interested."

"If your ladyship manes young Walter Cobham, I beg you won't spake of it. What could I do less—and him lying there for dead in the forest, and more than half gone?"

"Oh, for God's sake, sir, what *did really happen* to the dear boy?" exclaimed Rachel, whom Sir Hercules, as she stood behind Lady Tunstall, had not yet noticed.

"Pray make your mind asy, my dear madam," he replied; "it was not so bad, perhaps, as I said; but whether or not, Walter has long since got over it. He is as strong and hearty now as I am!"

"Thank God!" cried Rachel, clasping her hands. "But tell me, sir—I beg pardon, my lady, but if he was my own child I could not love him more!"

"There needs no excuse, Rachel," said Lady Tunstall, "I am as anxious as yourself to learn from what accident the boy was rescued." What Sir Hercules had to say was soon

told. Rachel listened with pale cheeks, and Lady Tunstall was not unmoved.

"A finer young fellow," said Sir Hercules, winding up, "never got into a scrape, nor out of one. There's stuff in Walter Cobham of the right sort, your ladyship."

"To receive so good a character from an officer so distinguished as Sir Hercules Kilbryde," said Lady Tunstall, graciously, "is the best proof of his desert. May I ask if we can see him? Or, stay, it might be better if I entered first into a little necessary explanation."

"I am afraid your ladyship's explanation *must* come first; for, to tell you the truth, Walter is not at home. *Something* took him off to Paris this morning before I was out of bed."

There was a sly twinkle in the speaker's eye, as if he meant a good deal more than his words expressed, but he did not venture to be more explicit. "If she *is* interested in the boy," he thought, "the surprise will be the more agreeable!"

Reserving so much of the family history as told most injuriously against her mother, Lady Tunstall then detailed the information she had just acquired respecting Walter's early life, commenting, as she did so, in very affectionate terms, on Rachel's care and kindness.

"Allow me to take your hand, ma'am," said Sir Hercules, addressing Rachel; "sure I ought to have remembered you at once: the fault is mine, for you're better looking than ever! Oh, it's well I recollect the day I last saw you: there have been changes since then, and some of them sad ones! Yes," he added, turning to Lady Tunstall, "I'm a living witness to the marriage of the poor boy's father with the beautiful young lady, your ladyship's sister; besides, there's my name in the book at Saint Cuthbert's church, in Carlisle, written with my own hand! As to his identity, only look in Walter's face and you have proof enough. I guessed whose son he was, long before my friend Dalton wrote a syllable on the subject. It's a question I'm almost afraid to ask, but—is his mother living?"

"Yes, sir," replied Lady Tunstall, with a sigh; "but," she continued, more cheerfully, "I trust she will arrive in Paris shortly, and then her long yearning will be appeased. After that, the difficult task remains of reconciling my mother to the events by which all her intentions have been frustrated."—"I have not the honour of knowing Mrs.

Scrope," said Sir Hercules, "but she must be hard to please if she can object to Walter when she sees him."

Lady Tunstall shook her head doubtfully, but said nothing further about her mother, and the gallant Irishman turned the conversation. It came back, however, before long, to Walter, both Lady Tunstall and Rachel being eager to know when it was likely he would return to Maisons.

"He may be back in an hour or two," said Sir Hercules, smiling, "though I don't think it very likely, if, as I imagine, he has gone to pay his respects at your ladyship's hotel, for, somehow or other, it seems, he has found out that Sir James Tunstall is in Paris, and that he ought to call upon him."

For the second time the look of Sir Hercules was more significant than his words, and intuitively each of his auditors appeared to comprehend him,—Rachel with a nervous apprehension, the result of long habit, Lady Tunstall with a sense of something at last explained. "You mean to say," observed the latter, "that my nephew has not forgotten those whom he met in Rouen cathedral."

"Bless you, my lady!" exclaimed Rachel, "for calling the dear boy by that name!" Again Sir Hercules smiled.

"Walter's memory," he said, "is very retentive; but if your ladyship will give me leave I will do myself the honour of presenting my friend, Dr. Kane, who took charge of him during his illness. He can confirm my testimony; perhaps add something to it."

A ready assent was immediately given to this request, and from Dr. Kane, at the instigation of Sir Hercules, Lady Tunstall very soon learned that Walter already suffered from a wound beyond the surgeon's art to heal; but dangerous as were the symptoms, she heard them detailed without appearing sorry. "Foolish boy!" she said. "No, no, it cannot be thought of—at all events not yet." And Rachel, who heard her words, looked up in her face with tremulous joy.

"If, however," resumed Lady Tunstall,—“if what you tell me be true, it is clearly useless for me to prolong my visit here and equally clear that my presence is required elsewhere.”

Expressing the hope of soon seeing Sir Hercules and Dr. Kane at the Hôtel Mirabeau, Lady Tunstall and Rachel re-entered the carriage, and the horses' heads were turned towards Paris.



## CHAPTER LI.

BON SANG NE PEUT MENTIR.

TEN minutes had not elapsed after the departure of Lady Tunstall when Walter Cobham presented himself at the Hôtel Mirabeau. A smile from the *concierge* was his passport to the *premier*, where his inquiry was answered by the information that miladi had gone out. And Sir James? He had passed a good night, the valet replied, but was not yet risen. As his last resource, Walter gave his card, and asked to see Miss Tunstall. The young stranger looked so bright and confident, and so much of the family air was in his aspect, that the valet did not hesitate to admit him, but conducted him at once to the apartment where he had seen Mary the day before. She was not there now, but many things betokened her recent presence, amongst them a handkerchief lying on an open book, as if it had only been just left. Chorister, too, was sleeping on the rug. On this occasion, however, instead of barking, he rose and stretched himself, wagging his tail. Walter fondled the dog, calling him by his name, and then, after glancing round the room, as if to single out every object that Mary might have touched, he lifted the handkerchief, drew a deep breath as he held it to his face, and cast his eyes on the page where hers had so lately rested. Which of the precious lines that studded that page had she been reading?

While Walter was bending over the book, Mary Tunstall entered the room. Light as was her footstep, he heard it."

"Forgive me," he said, "for coming—against your wish."

"Not against my wish, Walter, but because it is not right that we should meet as we do now. If mamma were here——"

"I came, Mary, on purpose to see her: to speak to her—to tell her of my love for you—to ask her to let me hope for what you, Mary—oh, let me think so!—will not, one day, deny!"

"Walter! Walter! your rashness terrifies me. If—if—I have a regard for you—and why I should I know not—so brief is our acquaintance, so slight our knowledge of each other——"

Ah, Mary, throw away the doubt, accept rather the

happier omen. See! I also derive our fate from Juliet's words :

“ ‘This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,  
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.’ ”

You have read at least thus far ! ”

Mary turned away her head, while Walter took her hand.

“ Was I right ? ” he whispered.

“ It may be so,” she replied softly ; “ but, oh, Walter, you venture most unadvisedly ! Mamma is excessively proud, her temper quick, her will absolute. And then there is papa ! If they should be angry, if they should say you must not come here again ! Oh, Walter, leave me, go away now, I will be true to you, but wait—wait for some opportunity. Let your friends speak first ! ”

“ My friends, Mary ! Yes ! I have friends. Mr. Dalton is a relation of mine ; I am living with Sir Hercules Kilbryde ; but in such a case as this one's best friend is oneself. Listen, Mary : my father was an officer in the army, my mother a lady of rank, I believe, though I never saw her or my father either, and the little I know of them has only been told me within the last few days. But still I am well-born, and Sir Hercules says he will get me a commission. Once in the army, if war breaks out, I am sure of promotion—I will do something to *make* them promote me—and then, Mary——”

So young, so inexperienced, was it any wonder that Mary's doubts should vanish before the picture that Walter painted ? He pursued the theme, nor ceased till he had brought her to agree to all he proposed. His first step would be to tell everything he knew of his history to Lady Tunstall—he told it now to Mary, winning from her many tears—and then, if rejected, he would put his trust in his own strong purpose to make a name and enforce consent against all opposition. It was singular the change that love had wrought in gentle Edith's child, in Rachel's tenderly nursed darling ! A change, indeed, it was not : rather the development of a bold and ardent nature, never called upon for self-assertion until now. How the time flew while the lovers were castle-building together !

The first shock to the fabric was an exclamation from Mary at a report of fire-arms in the street. Both hastened to a window that looked out on the Rue de la Paix, and

were astonished to see a crowd, most of them with muskets in their hands, rush past in the direction of the Boulevards.

"What can be the meaning of this?" said Walter, who knew nothing of the politics of the hour, or—to speak sooth—of any politics. "One of the rows, I suppose, that the people of Paris are so fond of. Why do you turn so pale, dearest Mary! No harm can come to you here." And he drew her close to his side.

"It is not that, Walter," she replied—"but mamma is out. She has been gone longer than I expected."

"Where did she go to, Mary?"

"I don't exactly know. A short distance, I believe, from Paris. She took with her—I meant to have told you before—your kind nurse, Rachel."

"Rachel!" exclaimed Walter, in astonishment. "How came she here? What does Lady Tunstall know of her?"

"That I can't say; but she arrived last night, and was with mamma for a long time. Her husband brought her."

"Monsieur Perrotin, too! Is he in the house, Mary? Can I see him?" A servant was summoned. He said that Monsieur Perrotin had gone out shortly after Lady Tunstall. Questioned about the disturbance in the street, he replied that it was said, he did not know how truly, that the people were making barricades.

While he was speaking the *rappel* began to beat in the Place Vendôme, a squadron of dragoons went by at a quick trot, and the sound of musketry came from the Boulevards.

"This is becoming serious," said Walter; "more of a row than I fancied!"

"Oh, mamma, mamma! what will become of her!" cried Mary, bursting into tears.

"I will go and look for her," said Walter. "I recollect the carriage perfectly; I remember her face too; and then Rachel is with her!"

"But you don't know where to seek her, Walter. You may be exposing yourself—uselessly—to danger."

"Danger, Mary! That's nothing. Very likely the *conscience* can tell us which way she went."

The man was sent for, and had fortunately heard Lady Tunstall say, "Maisons, par la barrière de Neuilly."

"Maisons!" exclaimed Walter. "That's where I am going! I know every inch of the way. It's impossible I

can miss them on the road, if I don't wait too long. God bless you, Mary, dearest; rely on it, I will bring your mother back in safety."

He strained her to his bosom in one fervent embrace, kissed the tears from her eyes, and rushed from the room. Mary threw open the window, and saw him run towards the Place Vendôme. But he was stopped there by the head of a column of infantry, which was drawn up preparing to march. He did not stay to parley, but at once retraced his steps to the café at which he had kept watch over the Hôtel Mirabeau; there he caught sight of Mary at the window, waved his hand with an encouraging smile, and then turning the corner of the Rue Neuve Saint Augustin, swiftly disappeared. He had taken the only route that seemed open, intending to proceed by the Madeleine and the Rue Royale, but at the angle of the Boulevard with the Rue Neuve des Capucines he found an impediment in the shape of a half-formed barricade immediately in front of the hotel of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Men in *blouses* and boys in their shirt-sleeves—the restless *gamins de Paris*, who wished for no better occupation—were heaping the loosened earth and piling the upturned pavement above the *débris* of broken vehicles of every description, while a hastily organised *garde mobile*, with bayonets fixed, stood sentinels over the work.

Before he shaped his course, Walter asked a *blouse*, who was resting a moment from his toil, what was the meaning of all he saw. "What it means?" answered the man. "It means—revolution! We want the year 'Thirty' over again, and something besides. *En avant!* And, seizing his pickaxe, he returned to his task with redoubled energy.

Making no further delay, Walter scrambled over the incomplete barrier, and hurried along the Boulevard. In front of the Madeleine, and defending the approach from the Place de la Concorde, was another barricade, which might have been considered finished if those who were constructing it could have been satisfied, but still they kept adding to the rampart that stretched all across the end of the Rue Royale. And perhaps they were not wrong, for already a body of troops was seen advancing. To proceed further that way appeared impossible, and yet Walter did not wish to diverge from the direct road to Neuilly. While he was looking about to try and discover some

avenue through which he might pass, he heard himself called by his Christian name, and before he could well turn round he was clasped in the arms of a juvenile *garde m*

Though his face was grimed with dirt and gunpowder, Walter instantly recognized in the young warrior his bosom friend, Jules Vermeil!

After a few words of delighted wonder on both sides, Walter asked Jules how he happened to be there. The hero in expectancy, falling back on his favourite English, which had not improved by keeping, replied:

"Ah, but only this morning I am in Paris, principally to find out you, of whom news to my father was of Monsieur Perrotin write. I come alone in my apartment of railway carriage; no one sitted on my bank, so I putted there my bag of night and go sleep, lying my long, making of him a pillow. I wake myself at the embarking of station and go in cab to the street Coq-héron at the excellent family Clovis. They give to me a famous breakfast. Then I prepare for your castle at Maisons, where they tell me at Rouen that you lodge. But suddenly a cry come in the street, a shout of 'Barricades' and 'Vive la Liberté!' I think then only of that. I seize a gun to Monsieur Clovis, with all things for the shooting, and run into the street. On the Boulevard I fire away several times, not knowing how many troops I kill, till here I am. Oh, what a joy to find you, my dear Walterre!" Walter laughed heartily at this speech; more, perhaps, at the ideas suggested than at the phrases employed. He then rapidly related his own position, describing what brought him there.

"You must help me first, Jules, and Liberty afterwards—if you are really enlisted in her service. See there!" he suddenly shouted, "a carriage is coming this way! The horses are at full speed! Yes! yes! It is her coachman—I recognize the man! My God! the troops are approaching also! The fellows here are preparing to fire. They will be caught in the *melée* before we can reach them! Follow me, Jules!"

As he spoke, Walter seized a naked sabre which was lying at his feet, and reached the summit of the barricade at a bound. With equal activity Jules gained his side. A cheer instantly arose from the excited people, who saw in the act the assertion of the popular cause, though some amongst

them, more used to *émeutes*, called to Walter and Jules to descend, or they would be shot. And, indeed, it seemed likely; for scarcely had the young adventurers shown themselves on the barricade before crack—crack—crack—went several of the rifles of the *tirailleurs* who were thrown out in front of the main body of the troops. Their balls went past harmlessly for Walter and Jules; one of them, however, took effect on the driver of the carriage, who fell from his seat sorely wounded, while the horses, left without control, began to plunge fearfully. Another moment and Lady Tunstall and Rachel, of whose pale faces Walter caught a glimpse, would have been overturned, but as quick as thought the daring boy leaped from the barricade, still calling on Jules to follow him, and dashing at the horses' heads, clung to the bridles with desperate strength and averted the impending danger. "Drop your gun, Jules, and hold fast here," cried Walter, "while I see to the ladies." He was at the carriage door before he had done speaking, and Jules supplied his place.

"Lady Tunstall—Rachel, dear Rachel—never fear! We will get you out of this mess. Leave the carriage directly! There is time to escape before they fire again."

Scarcely—for now came dropping shots from distant windows—now rose the cry of "Vive la Liberté!" from behind the barricade—now nearer was heard the tramp of the soldiers, coming on *en masse* after the *tirailleurs* had been called in. "Now, Jules, now!" again cried Walter; "leave the horses—help Rachel along while I take care of Lady Tunstall. This way—this way!"

Crash came a volley from the front rank of the troops, but before the muskets were levelled, Walter and Jules had forced back a door inadvertently left half-closed, had hurried their charges in, had shut the portal close, and Lady Tunstall and Rachel stood in safety. They both uttered one exclamation in common: not of joy for their own deliverance, but of apprehension for the poor wounded coachman.

"I will save him, too," said Walter; and before a hand could be raised to arrest his progress he was again in the streets. He tore a handkerchief from his breast—it was Mary's—and waved it over his head. "Respect aux blessés!" he shouted, and the cry was obeyed: not a trigger was pulled on either side. Walter raised the wounded man, whose arm had been broken, and who lay stunned and helpless on the

pavement. "How," he thought, "shall I lift him?" But looking up he found that Jules was again by his side, as well as the porter of the house into which they had forced their way. Between them the sufferer was carried in—not without loud exclamations of generous applause from all who witnessed the deed.

Hospitable hands soon removed their burden, and the poor fellow was left to surgical care, while Walter, who would not listen to a syllable of thanks, urged Lady Tunstall across the court-yard of the hotel. He had learnt, in one instant of hasty inquiry, that there was a door on the opposite side which opened into the Rue Richepanse. Once there, they were beyond the tumult and danger of the outbreak; but several streets still lay between them and the Rue de la Paix, and a considerable circuit had to be made before the party arrived at the Hôtel Mirabeau. They were met on the staircase by Sir James and his daughter. Mary rushed into her mother's arms, while Sir James eagerly inquired, "What the devil had been the matter?"

"You must ask Walter—Walter Cobham—my nephew!" gasped Lady Tunstall, sinking fainting into a chair.

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## CHAPTER LII.

### A SUMMONS.

THE revolution had taken its course, leaving France at the mercy of every impulse, and the continent of Europe trembling with every throe that convulsed its political centre. It was no time to prosecute journeys of pleasure or to linger amid scenes rife with disturbance, and all those in whose fortunes we have taken interest were once more upon English ground. But though the state of public affairs was cause enough for this change, domestic reasons had still more strongly operated. Scarcely had Edith arrived in Paris and pressed to her heart her newly-found child—scarcely had the excitement subsided which Walter's story created—and none heard it with deeper sympathy than Edith's generous husband—scarcely had the united families begun to consider what steps should be taken towards the establishment of Walter's claims, than a summons came from Scargill

Hall that at once directed all their footsteps thither. With the prescience which never deceives the sufferer, Mrs. Scrope wrote from her bed of sickness to Lady Tunstall.

"Agatha," she said, "I feel that my days are numbered : the world and I will soon have nothing in common ; but before I leave the world I have atonement to make for heavy wrongs committed. Your last letter told me that you expected Edith from Italy. I pray to God that she is with you,—for—after HIM, to her, most of all, is expiation due. I would, as far as in me lies, repair the evil I have done, and claim her forgiveness. Come, then, both of you, without delay !"

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## CHAPTER LIII.

### THE CURTAIN DRAWN.

It is the season of spring, though spring-time has not yet gladdened the wolds and fells of the dreary north, and a greater number of inmates than Scargill Hall has known for years are now assembled there. That the gathering is not one of festivity is seen in the anxious countenances of all who go noiselessly to and fro, or sit in silence as if expecting at every moment the confirmation of a general fear !

The physicians brought down from London have admitted the fact without reservation. Mrs. Scrope is dying !

Before we ask what passes in the chamber where she lies, with her nearest of blood around, let us listen to a conversation which is passing between three persons who are grouped in one corner of a broad stone terrace in front of the library windows. These persons are Sir Hercules Kilbryde, Monsieur Perrotin, and Detective Wormwood. The former is speaking. "When things of this kind come to pass, there is more in them, believe me, than mere coincidence ! To think of the news of that man's death arriving at such a moment ! Tell me, how was it ?"

Mr. Wormwood replies : "First and foremost, sir, before this last occurrence, I must just mention what happened up at Hendon. The same night as me and mounseer rescued his lady, Rose Cottage was burnt to the ground. But that wasn't all. In searching of the ruins next day the bones of a female



was discovered, which from their length—she was a very tall woman—couldn't be no other than those of Mrs. Yates. I suppose that after we left the house she stole back to lay her hands on what property there was, and while she was busy up-stairs a fire broke out, a spark from her candle falling most likely on some straw—there was plenty of it about the place, used for the patients' beds, no doubt—and the flames cut her off, for the neighbours that saw the blaze heard screams as well. At all events, she perished before help could reach her, for by the time the engines got up the roof fell in. The jury was satisfied with my evidence, and as soon as that business was over I set to work to find out what had become of Mr. Yates. In a day or two I learnt that a man answering his description had left a horse and gig at some livery stables in the Haymarket; then I heard of the same man at a French coffee-shop in Bear-street, and then he seemed to have disappeared from London altogether. Mounseer had told me enough to make it pretty certain which way he had gone, so I took a ticket at the Euston-square station and came down into these parts. The language here is not very satisfactory to a Londoner, but after hunting about the town of Barnard Castle I got to know that a person of the name of Wood—so he called himself, had been staying at a little inn near the bridge, and might have been staying there when I called but for some trouble he got into about a handsome girl, the landlord's daughter—he wanting to make free with her against her will. That made him shift his quarters, and where he went to next, nobody could say, except that he came to the Hall here one day, wanting to see Mrs. Scrope, but the servants denied her on account of her illness. It seems, however, that he had been living about, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, and at last he turns up in the place of all others where I should least have thought of looking for him."

"And where was that?" asks Sir Hercules.

"In the River Tees. Drowned! His body, caught in an eddy below a waterfall called the High Force, had been swept into a pool beneath a high bank and lay there floating, swelled to twice its proper size. It was discovered by a young man named Walker. A pocket-book was found upon him, with this letter in it, addressed, as you see, to the young lady, Sir James Tunstall's daughter."

"Ah!" exclaimed Monsieur Perrotin, "that is the letter which Walter tell me nevere was deliver."

"Very likely. He was a gent as I shouldn't have asked to have posted *my* letters! Then there was this newspaper in another of his pockets. Being in French, I haven't took the liberty of reading of it; but you can, mounseer. And as French newspapers is not common in this country, I shouldn't wonder if it contained some news that interested Mr. Yates. He had some friends, I believe, over the water."

The paper is still wet, and will hardly bear opening. But it is not necessary to spread it out, for on the first page of "*Le Blagueur Normand*" (edited at Rouen by our esteemed friend Corminbœuf) is an account of a trial before the Court of Assize of the Department of the Lower Seine, in which the name of Auguste Mercier appears conspicuously. Monsieur Perrotin hastily runs over the report: Chief witnesses, Jules Vermeil and Jean Courapied; "Guilty, with extenuating circumstances;" sentence, "the galleys for life!"

Sir Hercules, who is quite up in the case, communicates the necessary facts to Mr. Wormwood, who ventures once more to consider the circumstance as "a remarkable coincidence,"—and at this point in the conversation Mr. Dalton appears at the library window and beckons to Sir Hercules and Monsieur Perrotin to enter.

It is all over! Mrs. Scrope is dead! How?

With a long-absent smile on her lips, and enclosing within her own shrunken fingers the clasped hands of Walter Cobham and Mary Tunstall.

Let Mr. Dalton describe the scene.

"Worn out with pain and sinking fast, but her mind as clear as ever, she bade us all draw closer. On one side were Lord and Lady Deepdale, with Walter between them; on the other, Lady Tunstall, her daughter, and Sir James; at the foot of the bed, half hidden by a curtain, stood your wife, Monsieur Perrotin, and near her myself. In a low but distinct voice Mrs. Scrope then spoke:—

"'Mine,' she said, 'has been a mistaken ambition. To accomplish it I have striven long—and uselessly: the common end of ambition! My failure was my punishment; a slight one compared to that which awaited me had my projects been successful. How thankful am I now that they failed! How thankful that the moment for repentance was

granted! Your mother's earliest friend, Edith,'—(I was the person whom she so designated.)—'will tell you hereafter how a better spirit was awakened within me, and how I came to know that there was yet time to remedy evils which I thought were long past cure. That look, Edith, would repeat the words your lips have already uttered. But no! The life-long misery you have borne was far too heavy a retaliation for the concealment of which you accuse yourself. Had my nature been less severe, that fault had not been committed. And you, poor boy, who had done me no wrong whatever! Come near me, child, nearer still, and if I am worthy to give it, take my blessing. It was decreed that you should love your cousin. Come near, too, Mary! Give me your hand. You are both children still,—but my prayer—there is no need'—(and here she smiled)—'to make it an injunction,—my prayer is, that one day you may be united. Dry your tears, good Rachel, and remember that you also have granted me forgiveness. Thanks, Deepdale, for all your kindness—for the last time thanks, Henry Dalton! Agatha, kiss me! Kiss me, Edith. Now——"

"These were her last words."

\* \* \* \* \*

Sir Hercules and Monsieur Perrotin each grasped a hand of Mr. Dalton, and slowly returned to the terrace.

"After all, you see," said Sir Hercules, "that boy's courage carried him safely to his object."

"He put me in mind, Sir Kilbryde," returned the teacher of languages, offering a pinch of snuff—"he put me in mind of a famous man we have once in France. His name was Jacques Cœur, and he take for his motto, 'A vaillans cœurs rien impossible!'"

"Of which," said Sir Hercules, smiling, "I'll give you a free translation:—

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